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ABSTRACT

These volumes report on investigation, activities, and viewpoints related to rural library service. Topics covered are the role of rural libraries, the needs and characteristics of its users, the characteristics of its trustees, difference in operation and information service between rural and urban libraries, and the role of technology in helping rural people gain access to information. The volumes contain the following articles: (1) "Leisure Reading or Information Center: What Is the Library's Role?" (Donald B. Reynolds, Jr.); (2) "Rural Reading Behavior and Library Usage: Findings from a Pennsylvania Survey" (Harold W. Willits and Fern K. Willits); (3) "The Rural Information Center's First Year on the National Scene" (Pat John); (4) "Information Access in Rural Areas" (Kenneth P. Wilkinson); (5) "Technology and the Rural Library" (Polly S. Mumma); (6) "Distance Education: The Rural Role of the Urban Library and Information Science Program" (Joseph J. Mika); (7) "A Study of Rural Public Library Patrons by Unobtrusive Observation" (Thomas P. Shilts); and (8) "A Preliminary Survey of Public Library Trustees from New York State" (Jayne Tremaine). (KS)

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rural libraries

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Center for the Study
of Rural Librarianship

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Rural Libraries, a publication of the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, serves as a forum for the reporting of investigation, activities, and research related to rural library service. Manuscripts should be addressed to Ms. Rebekah Sheller, Editor; correspondence relating to subscriptions should be directed to Subscription Manager.

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These papers were presented at the conference sponsored jointly by the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship and the U.S. Department of Education in cooperation with the National Agricultural Library and the College of Continuing Education and Library Science, Clarion University.

LEISURE READING OR INFORMATION CENTER
WHAT IS THE LIBRARY'S ROLE?

Donald B. Reynolds, Jr.
Assistant Administrator
Central Kansas Library System
Great Bend, KS 67530

Prelude

As you have heard, I am from Kansas. For those who may not know where Kansas is, I have provided a map for you in your packet. I am a Kansan by choice (having been born and raised in New Jersey) who moved to Great Bend to work with what I consider to be one of the most creative and innovative approaches to providing library services to rural people--a regional cooperative library system.

The Central Kansas Library System is one of seven systems in Kansas established by the Kansas legislature in 1965. Participation was voluntary. Our purpose/mandate is twofold: 1) To serve rural people without a local library; 2) To improve library service where it already existed. We are supported by a mill levy tax on rural property paid by residents of the county not already paying a tax to a local town library. We have 52 legally established public libraries (two of which are public-school library combinations) and 12 outlets (book deposit sites which have no library board and no staff: one in a beauty parlor; one in a weigh station; one in a fire station; several in city clerk's offices; etc.)

As well as being a Kansan by choice (not accident of birth), I'm also a librarian by choice and not because my career in farming or teaching did not work out.

In ***Megatrends***, John Naisbitt says that, "We are drowning in information and starving for knowledge." This afternoon, we are here to seek some answers together about the library's mission. Let me start our search with a story.

A Story

A hen and a pig were walking one morning. The hen said to the pig, "Mr. Pig, I'm hungry. Let us have breakfast." The pig woke up, "Mrs. Hen, I'm hungry too. Yes, let us have breakfast. What do you suggest we eat?" "Let us have

ham and eggs," replied the hen. "You, Mr. Pig, will supply the ham and I will give the eggs." The pig was silent for a minute or so, and then dryly commented, "That does sound fair, Mrs. Hen, that I supply the ham and you donate the eggs. However, I must point out, Mrs. Hen, that when you give the eggs, it is just a contribution on your part; for me, when I give the ham, it's total commitment."[1]

I tell you this story so you will know that I've come here today to make a contribution, but not a total commitment. You see, lately I have begun to feel much like James Thurber when he said that he was no longer "young enough to know everything."

A. Introduction

My task is to speak to the role of the rural public library, especially in light of the information which has been gathered through the national rural library survey, just completed by the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship. I have a feeling from the program that several other speakers will touch on similar issues.

It has been intriguing to read the survey results. In many respects, the survey documents what many of us have suspected.

- People see the library as important to the well-being of their community. 80.1% of the respondents felt the library was "highly important" or "critically important" (Q. 15).
- 61.6% of the respondents feel that the most important goal of their library was "to provide information" (Q. 2).
- However, people use the library about equally as a source for best sellers (48%) as for reference books (49%).
- People rank the library as least important for finding information about

  Computers--42.9%

  Getting or changing jobs--40.2%

  Video cassettes--35.8% [I will go out on a limb here and predict a dramatic change in this evaluation; once a library starts loaning videos, the interest booms.]

We have always suspected that people do not take the library seriously as a source of information for questions about their livelihood, economic development, business, and major life questions.

Although this survey did not contact people who did not use the library, its findings parallel those of Ching-chih Chen and Peter Hernon, as reported in their book, ***Information Seeking*** (Neal-Schuman, 1982), a survey of New England-area library use and non-use.

Chen and Hernon believe that, "in an information-intensive society, the library must compete with a multitude of aggressive, enterprising information providers." It is their strongly held view that, "the library has diminished its position as an information provider by failing to service knowledge consumers' most basic needs."

Their respondents preferred information **gathered through interpersonal channels** (friends, co-workers, personal collections, other institutions). **Libraries only ranked ninth** among information providers used by their respondents.

On the accompanying chart from their book, you can see the frequency by topic of when people did or did not use the library (Figure 4-5). They have also compiled a list of reasons people have for not using the library (Table 4-4).

B. How are these results possible in these two surveys?

1. Sexual role stereotyping is still alive and well.

The rural library survey found that 72.8% of the library patrons completing the survey were women (Q. 27), probably a fairly accurate estimate of the male/female use of the library.

It is my feeling that our society is such that "culture" is for women to worry about; and "work/business" topics are for men to worry about.

In rural areas, for the most part, we perpetuate this: **libraries are for females**.

The general public perceives the library as a place presided over by nice, little old ladies. The public library was probably started by a women's club (in Kansas, by

statue, one seat on the state library advisory commission is held by a member of the state federation of women's clubs). The librarian may have a college degree, but it's not necessary. They "just" hand out westerns and romances; help the kids with their homework and school projects; **but they are not taken seriously as a source for information about "important" things**. Libraries are usually small, dingy affairs without too much attention paid to their overall appearance.

None of these may be the case, but the general public **feels** it that way.

The other information provider in rural areas (often over-looked in library literature) is the Cooperative Extension. Now the folks on these staffs are "professionals": the program is related to a university; each staff agent needs a college degree. The male agent handles agriculture ("work/livelihood") issues; the female agent handles homemaking ("culture") issues. There are beginning to be some changes here, as budget cut-backs are forcing the agents into each other's areas, and in some situations, the female agent has, by seniority and a freeze on staff hiring, actually been placed "in charge" of the county office--a task previously held only by the male agent. Women have become ag agents, but I am unaware of any male home economists.

TABLE 4.4. Reasons for Non-Use of Libraries

	Number of Situations	*Percent of Library Non-Use Situations*
Didn't need libraries	769	26.0
Didn't think libraries could help	425	14.4
Had enough information from other sources	322	10.9
Didn't occur to me	285	9.6
No reason given	243	8.2
In the past, I could not find what I want/need; assume the same to be true in this case	208	7.0
Lack of time	163	5.5
Libraries don't own what I want/need	97	3.3
Inconvenient location	93	3.1
Library holdings are not current enough	69	2.3
Assorted miscellaneous	286	9.7

from *Information Seeking* by Ching-chih Chen and Peter Hernon (Neal-Schuman, 1982)

FIGURE 4-5 Library Use and Non-Use by Selected Situations

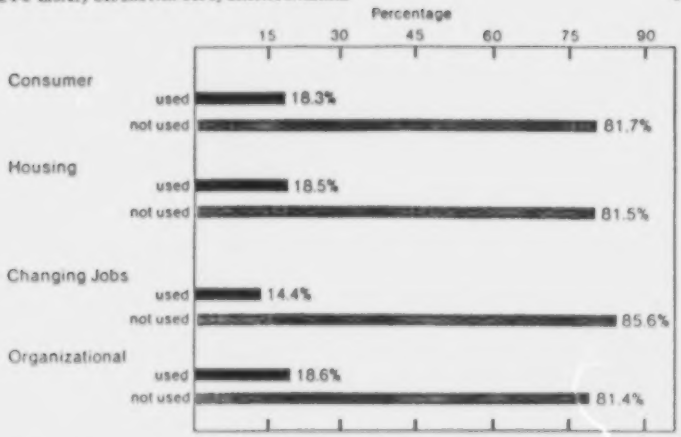
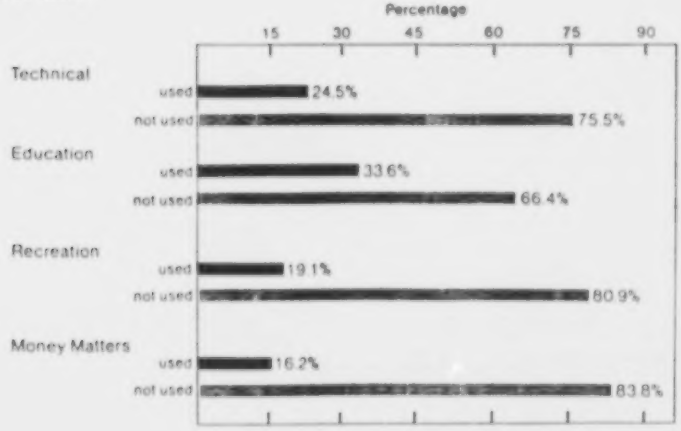


FIGURE 4-5 Cont'd.



from *Information Seeking* by Chung-chih Chen and Peter Hernon (Neal-Schuman, 1982)

Cooperative extension and community planning literature rarely, if ever, mention libraries as a possible information source. (We were recently told that our State Librarian, when talking with the Department of Commerce about a cooperative economic development data base, was told by a state legislator, "That's none of the library's business.")

This is why some of us were a bit disheartened at first with the National Agricultural Library's Rural Information Center (RIC)--it went to the ..ale ag agents first. We understood later how it needed to be done for the funding, but . . . .

Certain other aspects of rural communities must be taken into account if we are to begin to understand the arena in which the library is functioning (and these notions are probably not new to you who live in a rural area).

2. Rural people are independent; they don't ask for help.

The rural crises are changing this a bit. People are discovering their interconnectedness: what happens in Japan or Argentina or Saudi Arabia does affect us directly.

3. Rural people make do.

They work around things and people. If you don't have the money, you don't do it. They oftentimes feel that they can't have what the "big towns" do.

4. Rural people have very personal (to a point) relationships.

Everyone seems to know, almost by osmosis, what everyone else is doing.

5. Rural people have the attitude that small/rural is terrific.

Like the farmer's reaction in the movie ***Field of Dreams***, when asked, "Is this heaven?", he replies, "No, this is Iowa." Even so, there is still a niggling feeling about the "big towns" being better somehow, because they have more "stuff."

6. Rural people dislike change of just about any kind.

7. Rural is distance.

People spend a lot of time traveling long distances for just about everything. [I do not even remember the square miles of our System. I do know it is three hours north to south and three hours east to west.]

C. What is the public library's role in a rural community?

On May 19, 1809, Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter to a friend who was establishing a community library:

> "I always hear with pleasure of institutions for the promotion of knowledge among my countrymen. The people of every country are the only safe guardians of their own rights, and are the only instruments which can be used for their destruction. And certainly they would never consent to be so used were they not deceived. To avoid this, they should be instructed to a certain degree. I have often thought that nothing would do more extensive good at small expense than the establishment of a small circulating library in every county, to consist of a few well-chosen books, to be lent to the people of the county, under such regulations as would secure their safe return in due time. These should be such as would give them a general view of other history, and particular view of that of their own country, a tolerable knowledge of Geography, the elements of Natural Philosophy, of Agriculture and Mechanics. Should your example lead to this, it will do great good."

An 1883 issue of the ***Boston Sunday Herald*** said of the public library: "It's purpose is not purely educational, as many seem to think. . . . It is, what its name implies, a great popular library, and is designed to give pleasure to the masses of the citizens, as well as to impart instruction."

In his just-published book, ***The American Public Library and the Problem of Purpose*** (Greenwood, 1989), Patrick Williams writes, "For more than 130 years, the public library community has struggled with the problem of finding the right place for the library, the problem of purpose."

There is a wealth of writing about the library's purpose. In particular, the American Library Association has developed programs and documents about the underlying mission of the public library throughout the years:

> "Our public libraries and our public schools are supported by the same constituencies, by the same methods of taxation, and for the same purpose; and that purpose is the education of the people."
>
> - ***William F. Poole***
> - ALA Conference Speech, 1883

> "The public library is maintained by a democratic society in order that every man, woman, and child may have the means of self-education and recreational reading. The library provides materials for education and advice in their use. It diffuses information and ideas necessary to the present welfare

> and future advancement of a community. It strengthens and extends appreciation of the cultural and spiritual values of life. If offers opportunities for constructive use of the new leisure. It serves all ages and classes."
>
> - ***Standards for Public Libraries***
> American Library Association, 1933

> [The public library] "provides the means of self-education for all people in the community. It is a source of information on nearly every subject. It furnishes good reading for pleasure. It stimulates study and research, and helps to make possible many literary and scholarly achievements. It is basic to the education and continuous re-education of the American people as citizens, workers, and as civilized human beings. It plays a significant role in making democracy work by helping citizens to be enlightened participants in public affairs. It has come to be recognized as an essential part of our social and educational equipment."
>
> - ***Post-War Standards for Public Libraries***
> American Library Association, 1943

With all of the voluminous opinions of library sages, I feel a bit overwhelmed at making a contribution to this body of thought. So, I am going to come down squarely on both sides: **the role of the public library is to provide leisure reading and to be an information center.** Or, to say it another way, the role of the library is to provide knowledge, culture, and recreation for all age groups. Service is the role of the public library; service to individuals.

Patrick Williams goes on to say that, "Taxpayers support the library because they believe it confers the benefits of knowledge and culture. Taxpayers understand, in an obscure way, that these attainments are of great importance. . . . Taxpayers may not be deeply interested in knowledge and culture for themselves; but they respect and appreciate the importance of both. . . . The public library community should work to restore the identity of the public library as an institution for informal self-education."

In ***For the People: Fighting for Public Libraries*** (Doubleday, 1979), Whitney North Seymour states unequivocally:

> "The mission of the public library is to serve the public. Not *some* of the public. *All* of the public."

People in the community, as noted in the survey, expect both. Leisure reading and information are what people view the library as having. These are the positive services that make people feel good about having and paying for a library. As I pointed out earlier, people think the goal of the library is to provide information (61.6%), although they use it almost equally for best sellers and reference. However, when the Fort Worth, Texas, public library tried to build on land that had been bequeathed to the city for recreational use, the judge ruled that the library is an educational agency rather than a recreational one: "We do not believe that the study of books is in any sense a recreation." The city built its library elsewhere. (As reported in the March 1977 ***Wilson Library Bulletin***, p. 581.)

The Chen-Hernon study documents the fact that, for the most part, people do not use the library; they know, consciously or unconsciously, that the library will not have what they need and want. People intuitively seem to know what the library has, and they go there for it. 91.4% of the rural survey respondents felt the library provided what they needed (Q. 5). 60.4% rated the services as excellent; 36.4% as good. Now, accounting for the fact that rural folks rarely speak ill of a neighbor who is trying to do their best, this is a high approval rating: a combined 96.8% rating the library as good to excellent.

As a community information center, however, the rural library has much to learn. Patrick Williams says, "The vision of the library as the provider of information for the people faded in the early 1980s." (p. 124)

In the 1978 study, ***Passing the Threshold Into the Information Age***, the Arthur D. Little researchers outline three information-transfer eras:

Era I (Discipline-oriented Era): "Knowledge for knowledge's sake."

Era II (Mission-oriented Era): "Organize to do a job."

Era III (Problem-oriented Era): "Solving society's problems."

Chen and Hernon feel the library still is organized and equipped to meet Era I needs, and is generally unable to cope with the requirements from an Era III information seeker. Chen and Hernon note that, "Librarians need to be reminded that those Era III needs can only be met with an Era III conception of the role of the

library as fully integrated public servant. In order to be viable in this economic climate, libraries must be transformed quickly to be in tune with the needs of their clientele."

In the March 1950 ***Public Libraries***, Emerson Greenaway makes the point that we must face "the realization that urban and rural problems are so different that separate programs and policies may have to be set up." His observation has helped us realize that each library must determine for itself what it is going to be in its community. The authors of ***Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries*** (American Library Association, 1987) feel strongly that no library can play all of the roles fully, but community leaders must select those roles which are most appropriate for their community situation. Figure 11 from their book outlines the possible roles.

Community Activities Center: The library is a central focus point for community activities, meetings, and services.

Community Information Center: The library is a clearinghouse for current information on community organizations, issues, and services.

Formal Education Support Center: The library assists students of all ages in meeting educational objectives established during their formal courses of study.

Independent Learning Center: The library supports individuals of all ages pursuing a sustained program of learning independent of any educational provider.

Popular materials Library: The library features current, high-demand, high-interest materials in a variety of formats for persons of all ages.

Preschooler's Door to Learning: The library encourages young children to develop an interest in reading and learning through services for children, and for parents and children together.

Reference Library: The library actively provides timely, accurate, and useful information for community residents.

Research Center: The library assists scholars and researchers to conduct in-depth studies, investigate specific areas of knowledge, and create new knowledge.

Reprinted from ***Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries*** (ALA, 1987).

Figure 11 Public Library Roles

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D. What are the implications of all of this? What do we do about it?

Gertrude Stein once wrote: "Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense."

I am speaking from the perspective of being a librarian from a rural setting. The latest statistics available from the National Center for Education Statistics indicate that 64% of the public libraries in this country are in towns with populations below 10,000 people.

My quick review of several midwestern states found that:

Kansas

317 public libraries: 69% in towns under 2,500
90% in towns under 10,000

Iowa

520 public libraries: 76.7% in towns under 2,500
93.6% in towns under 10,000

Nebraska

259 public libraries: 78% in towns under 2,500
93.8% in towns under 10,000

North Dakota

79 public libraries: 60.7% in towns under 2,500
82% in towns under 10,000

A further fact interesting to note: in Kansas 3% of the public libraries serve towns that make up 42% of the population; in North Dakota 10% of the public libraries serve 58% of the population.

I have always quibbled with Bernie Vavrek about the definition of rural: towns with populations as high as 25,000 are not rural to me--no matter what the U.S. Census people say. Rural is also not the living areas within the one to one-and-one-half hour commuter ring around an urban center. Towns with under 10,000 people--not within an hour's commute of an urban center--now that's rural! [All of our member librarians wanted me to be sure that I said that.]

So, where's the common sense?

1. Librarians need to be trained as community servants.

The library is a person, and that person is the librarian. The library is an

absolute reflection of the personality of the librarian who runs it. Most rural librarians do not have an MLS degree; they are usually "one person" shops! We must recognize and accept the fact that the community librarian without an MLS is a functioning professional, albeit one who needs more training. MLS-trained librarians could learn much from these non-degreed colleagues.

Alvin Johnson in ***The Public Library--A People's University*** (American Association for Adult Education, 1938), says that library schools should provide training "in the educational meaning of books and in the organization of education groups." Graduate library schools must design their curriculum to train their students to be community participants and leaders. In his book, ***Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness***, Robert Greenleaf argues that "a leader can no longer be seen as the individual riding a white horse and summoning his troops to combat. Rather each of us must struggle to help those around us live their own lives more fully and successfully."

Charles Robinson speaks eloquently about the librarian's servant role in his article, "Can We Save the Public's Library?" (***Library Journal***, 1 September 1989): "In simple terms, the public library is an educational institution in the broadest possible meaning of that term, but it is not an academic institution. Trying to make it academic will endanger the existence of the public library. . . .

"The hope and promise of public libraries is in the smaller libraries--or those large libraries which are really consolidations of small service outlets for reasons of efficiency and economy. . . . The small libraries, and almost all American public libraries are 'smaller libraries,' have nearly cornered the supply of innovation, service orientation, and response to user demands in the field--although those characteristics are far from prevalent even among smaller libraries. . . . The future lies in responsiveness to the very people our libraries were created to serve, the people who provide the funds to serve their interests, not ours. Responsiveness demands. . . . providing service to the people who support us, service in the public's interest through the public's library."

2. Librarians and board members must assess the library in relation to the community.

Charles Robinson says that, "The public pays for the library, so the public should get what it wants." (***Publishers Weekly***, 13 August 1979). Library leaders must recognize the multiple responsibilities of the public library. Using the ***Planning & Role Setting for Public Libraries*** procedure, they can determine the appropriate public library roles for their own community.

> "With the advent of the mass paperback book, the public library has ceased to serve as a primary source of adult 'light reading.' Increasingly, the public library has become the community's encyclopedia of hard facts about everything under the sun, a reference library for student and adult researchers, a children's reading room, young adults' library, adult-education facility, senior citizens' second home. On top of this, as the community requires it, the public library also serves as information and referral center for social services, job opportunity and career development resources, focal point for programs to reach the poor and undereducated, library service center for institutions, and special library for the blind and handicapped."
>
> - Whitney North Seymour, Jr.
> ***For the People: Fighting for Public Libraries***, Doubleday, 1979

3. Librarians need to find out who the other information providers are.

They need to find out what they have; let them know what the library has, learn to refer questions to other providers.

In "The Public Library: Middle-age Crisis or Old Age?" (***Library Journal***, 1 January 1983), Lowell A. Martin writes that, "The public library may find its niche in the information complex, but I doubt if it will be as '**the** information center.' . . . What is the future of the public library? One answer is that people, at least some part of the populace, want a place to which they can turn to get the portion of the record of knowledge and experience that they cannot get elsewhere. This is the part of the record not aimed at a mass audience, the part that people seek as individuals. Here is the essence of the library, ministering to the searcher alone and unique . . ." That is, to provide information in depth to an individual.

There needs to be developed a formal, continuing dialogue on all levels--local, state, regional, national--between the cooperative extension agents and library leaders. The cooperative extension calls itself the People's University. Well, just as a fine college or university needs a library to fulfill its mission, so is the public library the people's library for the extension's university.

On 21 July 1982, Bernie Vavrek proposed at the **Joint Congressional Hearing on the Changing Information Needs of Rural America** the development of a national rural policy and the establishment of a Rural Information Caucus. I think this idea is more important than a general White House Conference on libraries (of course my prejudices and biases may be showing here!).

Perhaps we need to establish a Rural Library Association quite separate from the American Library Association.

The ALA/Public Library Association Rural Library Services Committee is tackling the role of the rural public library in programs it will sponsor at the March 1991 PLA meeting in San Diego and at the 1991 ALA Annual Meeting in Atlanta.

4. **Small, rural libraries need to establish and join a network of cooperating libraries (regional library systems).**

These cooperatives can provide a variety of professional support services, especially training for librarians, along with being the clerical hands needed by rural librarians to keep them at the front desk helping patrons instead of in back rooms doing paperwork.

5. **Librarians need to be proactive not just reactive.**

Librarians can't sit and wait for people to show up with questions and requests. They need to get out and integrate into the community: find out what people need, get it, then take it to them.

> As Whitney North Symour says, "These departures from simply serving as a reading shelf for a select group of book users are all to the good. Public tax moneys spent on public libraries should not be used to benefit the select few. There is an affirmative duty of public libraries to serve the entire community, and that means everyone who can use their service to advantage. This is not a process of self-selection, where the librarian can wait behind the counter for knowledgeable users to appear. It includes an obligation on library

trustees and staff to determine just what the community's information and reference needs are, to equip the library to serve those needs with materials and qualified personnel, and then to work out effective delivery procedures to get those services to the members of the community who need them."

The "**Steps for the Librarian**," which you have in your packet, indicates a process which applies to the general management of the library in all areas, not just economic development, for which we prepared it. Each librarian must be prepared to spend, and the board support, at least 10% of work time outside the library building attending community group meetings and visiting with community leaders.

6. **Librarians need to stop attending so many meetings with other librarians: it's the saved talking to the saved; the committed talking to the committed.**

Librarians need to take that time and use it productively for attending meetings of other groups.

Chen and Hernon: "By developing a sensitivity of and responsiveness to the information needs of the general public, libraries can envision and execute programs and services to meet these needs and establish themselves as vital and invaluable community resources."

It is said that funding follows performance. I would suggest that serious funding problems or lack of public support is a direct result of librarians not being responsive to community wants and needs. Libraries ought to be organized for people's needs, not for what librarians think their needs ought to be.

There is a caveat here: The community can only accept and move as fast as it is able to accept and move.

Goes a fable for the nuclear age:

The Lamb Who Imitated the Lion

"The lion, who ruled the animal kingdom, ate a different one of his subjects every day. Sometimes it was a pig, sometimes a deer--and occasionally he ate a chicken if he wanted a smack. No one complained. That was the way things had always been.

One day, a lamb, having observed the behavior of the lion, marched up to a chicken, kicked her senseless, and ate her.

The other animals were outraged. They put the lamb to death--for challenging the established social order."

Alan Neidle
Fables for the Nuclear Age (Paragon House, 1989)

Will Rogers wrote: "Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there," which brings me to my last point of common sense.

7. Be a hen not a goose.

The 18 August 1988 issue of the ***Rooks County Record***, a weekly newspaper published in Stockton, Kansas, a town of 1,800 people, carried the following on its editorial page.

A Fable

A goose is probably the most stupid creature that God ever created. Wh*en a goose lays an egg, what does she do? Does she flap her wings and lift her voice to the high heavens announcing the fact? No! She waddles off as if she were ashamed of the feat and tells no one.

What does a hen do when she lays an egg which is much smaller than the fine specimen produced by the goose? She announces the fact to all who will hear. She lifts her voice in glee. She is proud of her product and wants the whole world to know about it. What is the end result? There is usually more demand for hen eggs than there are goose eggs. It pays to advertise. The hen knows this but the goose doesn't.

So, take your mission and roles and promote, promote, promote!

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RURAL READING BEHAVIOR AND LIBRARY USAGE: FINDINGS FROM A PENNSYLVANIA SURVEY*

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Rural Reading Behavior and Library Usage: Findings from a Survey of Pennsylvania Residents

Research and the Rural Library

Rural librarians interested in improving their services and increasing the acceptance of and support for their facilities need to understand the nature of their communities and the characteristics of the citizenry they service. How do rural people differ from more urban folk? What are the demographic and social characteristics of the rural library's clientele?

The first of these questions can be addressed in a general way by consulting general descriptions of rural and urban demographic and lifestyle differences. These writings suggest that small communities located some distance from the more rapidly changing urban centers tend to be socially and economically disadvantaged. Rural areas in general (as contrasted with urban) have lower incomes and proportionately more families in poverty; lower educational levels; an over-representation of older residents; economic instability; and fewer and less diversified community facilities and services (Johnson and Beegle, 1982; Wilkinson, 1988). Moreover, there is

evidence that the attitudes, values and beliefs of rural dwellers differ from those of urban residents. Overall, rural people tend to be more traditional in their morality and personal values, more orthodox in their religious beliefs, and more resistant to change (Willits, Bealer and Crider, 1982). These general descriptions can and should be particularized by the rural librarians by compiling local data from census records and other public documents to elaborate the specific attributes of the local area, and by attention to local politics, news, and community action.

To address the question of the nature of the library's clientele, the field of library science has, through the years, focused attention on user surveys. These studies typically take the form of surveying patrons who visit the libraries of interest during a specific period of time. Data on the personal characteristics of patrons (gender, age, education, income, etc.), their reasons for coming to the library, and their evaluations of the quality of the services they receive can provide valuable information for understanding clients and general service needs. Such studies done on the national, state, or regional level can provide insights into the problems and promises of rural library management; similar local surveys, targeted to specific community circumstances can directly help to pinpoint operational problems, improve services, and enhance the ability of the library staff to address the local situation. However, user surveys, if they are to provide useful information for evaluation and planning, must draw upon valid, representative samples of the library clientele. Failure to do so can result in erroneous conclusions. To obtain a useful sample, it is important that the selection of respondents be through random process. Sample selection should <u>not</u> be left to self selection as when questionnaires are simply placed in a conspicuous place for patron access. Nor should it be left to the discretion of the library staff. Library workers (almost all female) are most likely to ask other women whom they know, particularly those who come to the desk to check in and/or check out materials. In the context of the patron's transactions, what would be more reasonable than to request the person to complete the survey form? Such a sample, almost certainly does not tap the (sometimes numerous) clients who utilize library facilities without visiting the desk. Nor does the concern or commitment of the staff

members involved in the survey project lessen the problem. Indeed, sample selection by individuals who are intent upon obtaining information only from clients whom they see as "typical" users may exacerbate the bias of unrepresentativeness by eliminating from consideration those users who do not fit their ideas of the norm. One wonders if the extremely high incidence of females reported in many user surveys and the overwhelming importance given to the library's function as a provider of "best sellers" does not reflect, at least in some measure, these types of sampling problems.

How then could a more representative sample be obtained? Basically one needs to avoid conscious or unconscious biases in the selection of the sample members. "If all elements in the population have an equal . . . chance of selection, there is an excellent chance that the sample so selected will closely represent the population" (Babbie, 1989:203). A reasonable approximation to such a sample might be obtained, for example, by enlisting the help of a volunteer (or perhaps local Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop members) to sit at the library entrance for 15 to 20 minutes say every two or three hours over the course of a week during the period of library operation and ask all patrons entering to take a few minutes to complete the survey form.

But user surveys (no matter how well conducted) tell only part of the story. Needed also to understand the rural library situation are studies which allow for comparisons between rural and urban persons in regard to library usage and reading behavior and descriptions of non-users as well as users of rural libraries. Research to meet these needs has been limited, at least partially reflecting the greater cost and presumed technical expertise needed to carry out general population surveys. Those studies which have been reported have dealt with the nation as a whole, but have not looked specifically at rural libraries (Yankelovich et al., 1978; Harris, 1979; Wood, 1985). Moreover, the samples, while of sufficient size to allow for general descriptions of national patterns have been too small to permit regional or state-level characterization.

Purpose

The availability of data from a recent statewide survey of Pennsylvania residents provided some information to address the subjects of rural/urban and user/non-user differences in a specific geographic area. The following research questions were addressed:

1) How do rural and nonrural people differ in regard to their library usage and reading behavior?
2) Among the rural residents, how do users and non-users of library services differ in regard to their personal and social characteristics and their reading behavior?

The Data

During the summer of 1988, a statewide telephone survey of Pennsylvania residents was conducted by the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at Penn State University (Willits et al., 1989). More than 95 percent of all households in the northeastern United States have telephones (Thornberry and Massey, 1988). The survey used random-digit dialing to assure contact even with those households that had unlisted numbers. Within each household, one respondent 18 years of age or older was randomly selected to be interviewed. In all, 1881 subjects agreed to participate in the telephone survey. At the end of the interview, each person was asked if he/she would be willing to answer a follow-up mail questionnaire. A total of 1670 persons (89 percent of those interviewed) agreed to participate in the mail survey. Of these 1241 (74 percent) completed and returned the survey form.

The purpose of the overall study was not to assess library usage or reading behavior. As a result, measurement of these ideas were neither as specific nor as comparable to other library research as might be desired. However, the survey instrument did contain a number of items which commented upon these matters, and the sample was both large enough and sufficiently heterogenous to allow for rural/urban comparisons.

To compare rural and urban required a decision as to what should be designated as "rural." While the U.S. Census Bureau defines a "rural" community as one of 2,500 or fewer inhabitants, population sizes of 25,000 or even 50,000 have also been used as the rural-urban delimiter, and some have utilized simply the Census Bureau's Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Area distinction. For his rural library survey, Vavrek focused on libraries in Nonmetropolitan Areas which were also located in towns with a population of 25,000 or less (Vavrek, 1989). In the present study, data on the sizes of the respondents' residence communities were used to classify them as "rural" or "urban/suburban." Persons living beyond the suburbs of cities of 50,000 or more in towns with a population of 25,000 or less were classified as "rural" for this analysis. The remainder were classified as "urban/suburban."

Frequency of library usage for each subject was obtained by asking: "How often in the last 12 months did you visit or otherwise use the services of a library in your community?" Answer categories of never, 1-4 times, 5-9 times, 10-19 times, and 20 or more times were provided. Frequency of reading behavior was assessed by the item: "How many hours each week do you spend reading books or magazines?" (less than 2 hours, 2-4 hours, 10-14 hours, 15-19 hours, and 20 or more hours). Subjects were asked to indicate whether they "liked to read" fiction and nonfiction books. In addition they were given a list of eight specific types of books and asked to indicate which they like to read. The list consisted of the following: history, romance, western, military, classics, gardening, crafts, and religious.

The differences between rural and urban/suburban respondents in regard to reading frequency and tastes and the relationships of frequency of library use to reading behavior and selected personal characteristics were examined and tested for statistical significance using chi square analysis. The .05 level was used to determine statistical significant.

Rural--Nonrural Comparisons

Rural people were somewhat less likely than their urban/suburban counterparts to have used the services of a library in their communities.

Approximately 56 percent of the rural respondents reported using the library at least once during the year, and 17 percent were regular users, having had done so ten or more times. Comparable figures for the urban/suburban sample were 65 and 21 percent, respectively. Rural people also spent somewhat less time than urban/suburban residents reading books and magazines each week, with more than one in five indicating that they spent less than two hours reading. Analysis not reported here showed that the relatively low reading and library usage reported by rural dwellers results almost entirely from their overall lower educational level. Rural respondents were more likely than urban/suburban subjects to report that they had failed to complete high school and less likely to have attended college. Less than 1 in 5 of the rural persons sampled were college graduates, while more than 1 in 3 urban/suburban residents had finished college.

Reflecting their lower reading level, rural residents were less likely than others to report that they liked reading fiction (64 percent versus 72 percent) and less likely to indicate that they liked nonfiction (60 percent versus 71 percent). Moreover, there were some differences in the specific types of books rural and nonrural respondents said they liked. Rural residents were less likely than those in urban/suburban areas to report that they liked to read the classics. On the other hand, rural people were more likely than others to read books dealing with religious topics, gardening, crafts, and westerns. There were no significant differences between the two residence groupings in regard to reading history books, romances, and military books. Indeed, except for the classics and gardening books, the percentage of rural and nonrural persons indicating that they liked to read the various types of books did not differ by as much as ten percentage points. History books, crafts books, romances and religious books were named by sizeable proportions of both residence categories; westerns and military books were considerably less popular. Thus, while there were some differences in the types of books liked by rural and nonrural residents, there was also a great deal of similarity between the expressed tastes of rural people and their urban/suburban counterparts.

Regular, Occasional, and Non-Users of Rural Libraries

However, more relevant to the rural librarian than a description of overall rural/urban distinctions in reading frequency and tastes, is a consideration of the differences between those who use rural libraries regularly and those who do so only occasionally or never. Any understanding of these differences may facilitate reaching the non-users or enhancing the frequency of library usage.

Respondents who indicated that they used the services of a public library 10 or more times a year were classified as "regular users," while those indicating one to nine times a year were termed "occasional" in their usage. Only those who said that they had "never" used the library in the last 12 months were classified as non-users. Using these categories, 17 percent of the rural respondents were classified as "regular users," 39 percent were "occasional users," and 44 percent were non-users. The incidence of rural use of library facilities was not only lower than the urban/suburban respondents in the present sample, but also somewhat less than that found in a recent general population survey (Wood, 1985). Moreover, since library use is likely viewed as a socially desirable activity, it may tend to be over-reported in any survey. Hence usage would be expected to be even somewhat lower than these figures suggest.

As expected, hours spent reading was positively related to frequency of library usage, Table 2. Only 37 percent of the non-users, compared to 58 percent of the occasional library users and 78 percent of the regular users indicated that they spent 5 or more hours a week reading. Similarly, regular and occasional users were more likely to say that they liked to read nonfiction. When users and non-users were compared in regard to their liking for specific types of books, only history and the classics showed significant differences by user frequency. In both of these cases, regular library users were the most likely, and non-users the least likely to report liking to read these books. However, there was no significant differences among regular, occasional, and non-users in regard to the proportion of respondents who reported that they liked to read romances, westerns, military, gardening, crafts, or religious books. Such a finding underscores the fact that people in rural communities

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(as elsewhere) are not dependent upon libraries to meet their reading interests. The availability of books is so widespread in American culture that, for many types of reading materials, library use is not associated with reading interest. The exception to this idea involved history and the classics--books which would likely be perceived as being both more expensive and less widely available than current offerings in mass outlets.

The relationships of frequency of library use to a number of personal and social characteristics were also assessed, Table 3. More than 7 out of 10 regular users were women, supporting the often observed tendency for women to outnumber men in library usage. However, non-users were also disproportionately female and occasional users were about equally divided between men and women. Thus, with the exception of the small proportion of those who used the library 10 or more times in the last year, gender showed little relationship to library use. Indeed, when the sample was divided into the two categories of users and non-users, there was no statistical difference between male and female rates of usage. The failure to find the profound gender differences reported in most user surveys may reflect the types of sampling problems suggested previously. Certainly the nature of the differences is that which would be anticipated from such sampling bias. It seems reasonable to expect, moreover, that the gender bias in library use historically noted in surveys of the general population may diminish across time. Carpenter (1979:348) noted nearly a decade ago that "it is possible that some shift in the sex ration [of users] is occurring." Women, because they traditionally did not work outside the home, were seen as having more time for reading and, because they were often the "errand runners" for the household, were likely to visit the library to obtain materials for other family members. The increasing entry of women into the labor force and changing gender-roles within the family may be altering the traditional patterns even in rural areas.

It also seems likely that the nature of the question used to delineate users and non-users may have lessened the gender differences observed in our sample. Most studies ask about the number of visits to the library during a specified period. Our

data asked about the number of times the subject had visited or otherwise used the services of a library. Thus, presumably, household members who utilized materials which were obtained for them should have been classed as "users", even if they never personally visited the library.

Education was highly related to library usage. About three fourths of the non-users had no more than a high school education, and nearly 1 in 5 was a high school dropout. Conversely, 65 percent of the regular users and 48 percent of the occasional users had attended college. Since educational level and reading frequency were expected to be linked with the more highly educated the most likely to spend time reading, reading frequency was controlled to determine whether education had a separate or direct effect on library use in addition to that accounted for by reading. It did not. That is, the impact of differences in education on library use resulted solely from the fact that education was itself associated with more time spent in reading.

There were statistically significant but slight marital status differences in frequency of library use, with regular users having a disproportionate number of single, never married persons, and proportionately fewer marrieds.

Age was also significantly related to usage level. With persons less than 50 years of age over-represented in the regular and occasional user categories, while those 50 years and older (especially those 65 years and older) are over-represented in the non-users. This negative relationship between age and patronage has been reported by other research (Carpenter, 1979; Wood, 1985). Since older citizens are likely to have less formal schooling than do younger ones, part of the effect of age was due to educational differences. However, even when the effect of education was controlled, persons 50 and over were significantly less likely than those younger persons to use the library. Particularly for the elderly, access to library facilities may be a problem and home-based or neighborhood delivery via bookmobile or courier may enhance usage.

Other research has noted that the presence of children in the home is related to the frequency with which adults in the household visit or otherwise use the library

(Wood, 1985). The present analysis elaborated upon that idea in terms of rural people by considering the presence of children in difference age categories. The presence of young adult children in the household (18 years of age and older) was not associated with library usage, while the presence of younger children was. This relationship was particularly strong for persons with at least one child between 10 and 17 years of age. This strongly suggests that the adult respondents "used" the library, at least partly, in discharging their parental roles. Indeed, it is possible that their reported "use" of library services did not reflect their own personal recreational or information needs at all but simply the exigencies of their children's school or other obligations. Women were only slightly more likely than men to have their library use affected by the presence of children under 18 in the household.

These data also suggested that regular users do not fit the popular stereotypes of "bookworms" who spend their time alone hunched over the printed page. Library users were found to be significantly more likely than their non-user counterparts to be involved in community organizations, and the frequency of usage increased with increasing participation in such activities. Such a finding is congruent with that reported in a recent nationwide user survey by Vavrek (1989). He found that people belonging to community organizations had greater information needs and were more dependent on the library to satisfy those needs.

Discussion

What can be concluded from these data? For one thing, it seems clear that overall, the residents of rural communities had lower educational levels, read less frequently and used the library less frequently than did their urban/suburban counterparts. Moreover, library usage among rural residents was found to be selective not only for frequent readers, but also for persons under 50 years of age, families with minor children at home, persons with some college training, and individuals who are active in community organizations. While females were not more likely than males to use the services of a library, they were more likely to be "regular" users. Other researchers have reported similar results using national

and/or urban samples. The present study both updates these findings (by focusing on recent data) and particularizes them to rural areas.

Moreover, it provides some information on the reading tastes and preferences of rural and nonrural respondents. Rural residents were less likely than those living in urban/suburban areas to indicate that they "liked to read" both fiction and nonfiction, reflecting their lower reading frequency. However, in some specific content areas, rural respondents expressed higher rates of interest than did nonrural people. Thus, rural residents were more likely than those living in urban/suburban areas to indicate that they liked to read about gardening, crafts, religion, and western adventures; urban/suburban dwellers were more likely to indicate an interest in the classics. There were no significant differences between rural and nonrural respondents in their liking of history, romances, and military books.

However, the most noteworthy observation from these data is not the nature of regular rural library users or their reading preferences, but the low percentage of regular library users and the relative high proportion of non-users. While more than half of the rural respondents in the sample reported that they used the library at least once during the preceding 12 months, only 17 percent were classified as "regular users." Moreover, it should be recalled that "regular users" were defined as people who reported that they used the library "10 or more times" in the last year--an average of less than once a month. Only one in every ten rural respondents were truly "frequent" users, reporting that they used the library 20 or more times in the year. The low incidence of regular (of frequent) use was underscored when the data in the preceding tables were recast. The previous analysis compared the percentages of regular, occasional, and non-users who had certain social characteristics or reading interests. This is the procedure usually used in the library literature to describe the differences among persons in various user categories. However, this method masks the differences in the number of persons in each user category. It is also useful to examine the percentage of each type of person who is a regular, occasional, or non-user, i.e., to calculate the percentages for each cell in the table based on the "row" totals. The same relationships of frequency of use to personal characteristics and

reading behavior are observable, but the low incidence of regular use and the relatively high proportion of non-users in all categories is highlighted. In only two instances (college graduates and those who indicated they spent 15 or more hours a week reading) was the percentage of "regular" users greater than the percentage of non-users and even here the 10-times or more a year users was never a majority of those surveyed. In every other category non-users outnumbered regular users, often by ratios of 2:1 and 3:1; sometimes even more.

Given the fact that libraries are supported by public funds, the limited and selective nature of the user group is troubling. Perhaps the suggestion of Campbell and Metzner (1950:45) voiced nearly four decades ago continues to reflect the current state of affairs:

> So far as public response is concerned, it is apparent that the library suffers from being a quiet voice in an increasingly clamorous world. A great many people have virtually forgotten that the library exists. They may have used it extensively during their school years but as adults they rarely think about it.

If this is the case, the question can be asked: What is the rural librarian to do? Some have answered this query by simply dismissing the problem of non-users, arguing that libraries are for people who want to use them (Gaines, 1980; Ballard, 1981). Since user surveys have repeatedly shown that book use and book circulation is the overwhelming reason why people go to libraries, why not focus attention on accumulating books and better serving the current user's needs and interests? Moreover, these people argue that efforts to reach the non-user are doomed and should be avoided as a costly waste of the public treasure.

But isn't the purpose of library service caught in the following statement?

> All information must be available to all people in all formats purveyed through all communications channels and delivered to all levels of comprehension. If any of these five qualities is compromised, the whole is enervated, and the national enterprise as a consequence suffers (Kaser, 1978:546).

If this grand goal is taken as policy, the incidence of library non-use serves as a challenge. Rather than simply turning inward to look only at its users, the rural library needs to look outward to those who it does not currently serve, with a wholehearted commitment to outreach, information and referral, and other

nontraditional services (Harris and Sodt, 1981). To do so effectively, there is a need within the field to supplement our knowledge of library users, gleaned from surveys of current patrons, with data from the larger population to obtain information on citizens who frequent the library only rarely or not at all. This current study comments in only a cursory fashion on these ideas. Needed is research to gather detailed data on the motivations, perceptions, values, and personal circumstances of the majority of the rural population who are non-users of library services. Such knowledge should help us to understand this important target group and to enhance services to attract them to the fold of library users.

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Table 1. Differences between rural and urban/suburban respondents in regard to library usage and reading behavior.

Variable	Rural (N=698)*	Urban/Suburban (N=525)	Chi Square
	Percent		
Times Used Library in the last 12 months			
Never	44.3	35.0	13.15
1-4 times	28.4	29.3	
5-9 times	10.7	14.3	
10-19 times	7.2	8.8	
20 or more times	9.5	12.6	
Hours spent reading each week			
< 2 hours	21.4	16.4	9.08
2-4 hours	26.8	24.2	
5-9 hours	24.1	25.8	
10-14 hours	15.5	20.2	
15 or more hours	12.1	13.4	
Read Fiction			
No	36.5	27.7	10.25**
Yes	63.5	72.3	
Read Nonfiction			
No	40.2	29.4	14.93***
Yes	59.8	70.6	
Read History			
No	55.2	51.7	1.34
Yes	44.8	48.3	
Read Romances			
No	63.1	66.5	1.39
Yes	36.9	33.5	
Read Westerns			
No	81.2	87.1	7.32**
Yes	18.8	12.9	
Read Military			
No	83.0	81.3	.53
Yes	17.0	18.7	
Read Classics			
No	73.1	59.9	23.55***
Yes	26.9	40.1	
Read Gardening			
No	65.2	77.3	20.93***
Yes	34.9	22.7	
Read Crafts			
No	55.2	62.2	5.86*
Yes	44.8	37.8	
Read Religious			
No	64.2	71.0	5.99*
Yes	35.8	29.0	

* Significant .05
** Significant .01
*** Significant .001

*Number of cases varies slightly due to missing data.

Table 2. Differences in reported reading behavior of nonusers, occasional users, and regular users of rural libraries

Variable	Nonusers (N=309)*	Occasional Users (N=273)	Regular Users (N=116)	Chi Square
	Percent			
Hours spent reading each week				
<2	31.2	17.3	4.3	79.26***
2-4 hours	32.1	25.1	17.4	
5-9 hours	17.2	28.8	31.3	
10-14 hours	12.3	17.0	20.9	
15 or more hours	7.1	11.8	26.1	
Like to read fiction				
No	43.4	35.9	18.1	23.32***
Yes	56.6	64.1	81.9	
Like to read nonfiction				
No	57.0	28.6	21.6	68.35***
Yes	43.0	71.4	78.4	
Like to read history books				
No	63.4	51.3	43.1	17.03***
Yes	36.6	48.7	56.9	
Like to read romances				
No	63.4	62.3	62.1	.11
Yes	36.6	37.7	37.9	
Like to read westerns				
No	80.9	78.8	87.9	4.54
Yes	19.1	21.2	12.1	
Like to read military books				
No	86.1	78.8	83.6	5.53
Yes	13.9	21.2	16.4	
Like to read the classics				
No	85.8	66.3	54.3	52.21***
Yes	14.2	33.7	45.7	
Like to read gardening books				
No	66.7	60.8	72.4	5.28
Yes	33.3	39.2	27.6	
Like to read craft books				
No	55.3	56.4	53.4	.29
Yes	44.7	43.6	46.6	
Like to read religious books				
No	61.2	68.9	62.9	3.89
Yes	38.8	31.1	37.1	

*** Significant .001

*Number of cases varies slightly due to missing data

Table 3. Difference in personal/social characteristics of nonusers, occasional users, and regular users of rural libraries.

Characteristics	Nonusers (N=309)*	Occasional Users (N=273)	Regular Users (N=116)	Chi Square
	Percent			
Gender				
Male	45.0	49.5	28.4	14.80***
Female	55.0	50.5	71.6	
Education				
< High school grad	19.1	11.0	5.2	74.64***
High School grad	55.7	40.7	29.3	
Some college	16.2	24.5	29.3	
College Grad	9.1	23.8	36.2	
Marital status				
Married	65.4	69.1	55.2	10.25*
Divorced, widowed, separated	21.0	14.7	23.3	
Single, never married	13.6	16.2	21.6	
Age				
< 35 years	26.5	34.2	30.2	43.47***
35-49 years	18.1	32.0	38.8	
50-64 years	31.1	16.9	21.6	
65 years and over	24.3	16.9	9.5	
Children < 10 years at home				
None	82.5	77.3	66.4	12.79**
One or more	17.5	22.7	33.6	
Children 10-17 years at home				
None	90.0	73.6	72.4	30.87***
One or more	10.0	26.4	27.6	
Children 18 years or older at home				
None	86.7	89.0	88.8	.80
One or more	13.3	11.0	11.2	
Participate in community organizations				
Very active	9.8	12.5	17.4	18.21**
Somewhat active	20.3	31.6	30.4	
Not active or don't belong	69.8	55.9	52.2	

* Significant .05
** Significant .01
*** Significant .001

*Numbers of cases varies slightly due to missing data.

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THE RURAL INFORMATION CENTER'S FIRST YEAR ON THE NATIONAL SCENE

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The Rural Information Center (RIC) is a joint project of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Extension Service and the National Agricultural Library (NAL) and is located at the library in Beltsville, MD. In May 1987 the USDA Deputy Secretary Peter Myers reemphasized in Congressional testimony USDA's commitment to rebuild rural America and outlined USDA's new rural development policy in a six-point rural regeneration initiative. Deputy Secretary Myers informed Congress that, as the third-point in USDA'S rural initiative plan, USDA was establishing a Rural Information Center at NAL. The center would provide up-to-date information to rural community officials about funding and technical assistance programs available to them.

RIC provides information and referral services to a target audience of local, state and federal officials, community development professionals (including academic and nonprofit providers), and volunteer leaders of local citizens groups involved with rural development programs.

RIC handles questions which fall into four broad categories:

- economic development -- how rural communities can maintain a competitive, diversified rural economy
- local government -- how rural local government services and facilities can be maintained and supported
- leadership and public decision-making -- how local leaders deal with community change

- o national resources and quality of life -- how rural communities seek to preserve and maintain national resources for the enjoyment and use of the current and future generations and preserve the quality and characteristics of their rural lifestyle.

RIC staff customizes the requested information so that it will best meet the user needs. The staff member taking the request asks a series of questions to specifically identify the use of the information and enable RIC staff to provide the best available information. RIC staff provides answers to questions, the names of organizations and subject experts when appropriate, identifies funding programs and specialized computer searches of bibliographic citations, with abstracts and full text from databases whenever available. The information package may also include copies of pertinent articles or legislation which may be in the NAL collection.

RIC staff recently started logging information requests in a customized online database tracking and trends monitoring system. The system is being used to record all RIC requests. The customized system provides RIC and the Extension Service database access for monitoring rural trends and identifying geographic locations with specific rural concerns. The system also captures branch and division statistics, produces information products and management reports, and provides an inventory control to RIC response files. The customized database system is part of a local area network.

Between Fiscal Year (FY) 1988 and FY89 the percentage breakdown in the types of subject requests RIC received has remained almost identical. In both years, 60% of all requests dealt with economic development and revitalization; in addition many of these requests involved funding source information. Another 25% dealt with questions involving the quality of rural life and the concern about environmental conditions, air and water pollution, and the preservation of natural resources. About 10% of the requests are concerned with providing local government services while the remaining 5% deal with questions on community leadership.

Likewise, RIC users have remained fairly constant between FY88 and FY89 with nearly 60% of all requests coming from the county, state or federal extension

staff. Other major users include libraries, universities, community development organizations, individuals, and businesses. The one significant change is that in FY88 only 4% of all RIC requests were from individuals while that figure increased to 13% during FY89. The individual callers in most cases are seeking funding sources usually for the purpose of starting a small business. RIC has online access to a variety of private, state, and federal funding databases in addition to a comprehensive reference collection of funding source directories.

It usually takes a year or more for an organization or individual to survive the lengthy grant application process and because the center has barely been in operation that long, RIC is just beginning to learn about successful funding results. Two which RIC is very pleased about occurred in Vermont and Virginia.

A Morrisville Vermont County Extension Service agent contacted RIC in November 1987. A handicapped small-business client seeking a Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant needed the names of some electrical contractors who build variable small speed DC motors to use on his specialized wheel chair invention. He had hit a dead end in obtaining this information, without which he could not complete his grant application.

RIC identified an appropriate contact organization and placed a call to the Small Motors Manufacturing Association and obtained the name of a key contact person. The contact provided the names of seven East Coast companies and agreed to act as a referral contact and provide technical assistance.

The Vermont businessman learned recently that his SBIR development grant request for $45,000 was approved.

A Virginia Extension Service horticulturist requested funding sources in September 1988 for the development of an ornamental horticulture industry for southwestern Virginia counties. The objective of this project was to increase nursery stock in the Mid-Atlantic states, especially the Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., region.

He had received some initial funding (less than $10,000) from Tennessee Valley Authority programs the previous year but was also interested in other funding

programs. RIC sent him federal program information, including TVA programs and private funding information. He applied to several programs and received $40,000 funding from a TVA program identified by RIC.

The project set up 35 demonstration projects in 25 counties in Virginia. Three of the counties already have nursery stock growing in them as of April 1989. Future plans include setting up a cooperative of nurserymen.

The Extension Service provided the FY88 operational funds for RIC while NAL provided the facilities and staff. Congress approved the center's funding as a line item in NAL's FY89 budget. While RIC's daily operations are handled by NAL staff, the Cooperative Extension Service which is partially supported by federal funds provides RIC with state coordinators. RIC expanded the project nationally in May 1988 from a six-state pilot test and invited all the states to participate. Nearly 20 states joined immediately and there are now RIC State Coordinators in 49 states and Guam. The one remaining state, Connecticut, plans to join. Four states, -- Colorado, South Carolina, Texas and Vermont -- have at least two professional staff specialists working with RIC while Nebraska has hired a new staff member to be the RIC State Coordinator. Nearly all of the state coordinators are state extension subject specialists usually with either a community resource development or local government background.

Since June of 1988 RIC staff have conducted twelve orientation workshops and trained 45 state coordinators along with some volunteer attendees from both the Extension Service and library profession. The coordinators spend two days at RIC. The first day is devoted exclusively to the RIC project; what it is; how it operates; what type of information and materials RIC provides; and, what is the role of the RIC State Coordinator. The RIC staff also provides CD-ROM and online database demonstrations. On the second day the coordinators receive an in-depth tour of NAL and demonstrations of various NAL database systems and technology projects.

RIC's training goal is to orient the coordinators to both RIC and NAL's information resource capabilities so they know how both resources can help them. In addition to the vast NAL resource collection of books, journals, instructional

materials, computer software and audiovisual materials, RIC also utilizes 35 online databases from DIALOG, LOGIN, and FAPRS on a regular basis in response to the various requests. Rural information does not exist in any one database and RIC staff have accessed over 120 databases in trying to answer various questions.

The DIALOG Information Services provide RIC access to over 20 million records from 300 different subject databases containing bibliographic citations to all types of international literature and audiovisuals. In addition, it also contains files with case studies, abstracts, and full-texts of documents. The RIC staff provides the more comprehensive text record information whenever possible.

The LOGIN Information Services database provides RIC access to full text records on problems encountered by local governments in such areas as economic development, housing, financial management, and services. LOGIN records include case studies and provide the name and phone numbers of key contact individuals or organizations, information on training courses, and resource materials, and the status of research projects.

RIC also utilizes the federal database FAPRS, or the Federal Assistance Programs Retrieval System. The U. S. General Services Administration in Washington maintains this system; it provides online access to more than 1,000 federal assistance loans, grants, and technical assistance programs. FAPRS is a full-test database providing such information as to who is eligible, the type of assistance (grants or loans) and who to contact for program information.

After the coordinators complete their RIC training they implement and promote the RIC program in their state. The coordinators pass on local information requests to RIC. The RIC staff in turn provides a customized response to best answer the request and sends it to the coordinator. The coordinator then analyzes and interprets the information for the local requester and provides necessary follow-up. RIC views the state coordinators as an extension of the RIC staff. The daily working relationship of this joint state-federal partnership is a major factor in the success of the RIC project.

A second state-federal partnership performing a major role in a successful RIC program is the three way link-up among the Cooperative Extension Service, the state libraries, and RIC.

In the spring of 1988 RIC started setting up a second network with the state libraries. NAL staff met with the Rural Library Services Committee (RLSC) during the January 1988 American Library Association Midwinter Conference in San Antonio to discuss using RIC as a nucleus in establishing a national network of librarians similar to the RIC State Coordinator Network. The RLSC recommended that RIC request that each state library designate a staff member as the RIC State Library Representative to coordinate with RIC and the respective RIC State Extension Coordinator. The state library representative assists the extension staff in locating, at either the local or state level, the information and resource materials identified by RIC in response to a request from their respective state.

RIC invited the state libraries to participate in the RIC project and establish this three way link to assist extension agents in local information and document delivery. Within six months 22 states joined the RIC project and additional states have also expressed an interest in participating. The states that have already joined are:

Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

RIC's first endeavor with a state library representative, in this case, Iowa, and the Iowa RIC State Coordinator, was very successful. The State Library of Iowa and RIC participated in a joint exhibit for rural economic development in Amana, Iowa at the September 1988 World AG Expo which was attended by more than 350,000 people. The theme of the exhibit was "Library Country". The joint exhibit project won first place in the Marketing/Community Relations category from the Iowa Library Friends Marketing for Excellence Program.

Another networking endeavor which is very successful and has proven to be

mutually beneficial is the one RIC has with Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

Since January 1988 three graduate library science interns have worked at RIC. They have all done a great job and each student completed two major projects during their three month internship; they usually do two special reference briefs on a rural topic. This is very beneficial to both parties because RIC has experienced a three-fold workload increase without a comparable staff increase since it expanded nationally last May and the staff is just managing to keep up with its request load. Consequently they rarely have enough time to devote to the preparation of reference briefs which are badly needed. With this intern program RIC is getting help from the graduate students who in turn are getting valuable professional experience which assists them in obtaining a future library position.

Another aspect of this cooperation is that NAL has been able to co-sponsor the last two conferences with Clarion University on information and rural economic development. RIC was fortunate in that it was established as a high-level USDA initiative to meet rural information needs. RIC enjoyed a great deal of support from the former USDA Deputy Secretary, Peter Myers, and other top level USDA officials view the success of RIC as an essential link in the USDA rural revitalization effort. In fact, in October 1988 RIC held an open house to celebrate its first anniversary and Deputy Secretary Myers was the principal speaker. Other featured speakers and guests included the Under Secretary and Deputy Under Secretary for Small Community and Rural Development. Even though Deputy Secretary Myers is no longer at USDA, RIC's high level support has not diminished. Roland Vautour remains USDA's Under Secretary for Small Community and Rural Development. He and his staff have been great supporters of RIC and his office issued a January 1989 report entitled ***Signs of Progress: A Report on Rural America's Revitalization Efforts*** in which it included a thorough segment on RIC's FY88 accomplishments.

This spring the Secretary of Agriculture established a Department-wide Rural Revitalization Task Force to examine the rural economic situation and make recommendations about USDA's future role in providing rural economic development. Although a newcomer RIC is already recognized as a significant contributor to

USDA's rural development program and NAL named the RIC Coordinator to serve on this Task Force.

The Task Force first reviewed 78 rural nonfarm programs of eight USDA agencies to identify any areas of duplication or overlap.

The Task Force next conducted surveys of the USDA field and Washington office staffs. The surveys identified rural needs and problems, examined the wide range of current USDA rural programs, and identified factors affecting the performance of these programs. The surveys led the Task Force to conclude that, USDA's programs for the most part do not promote any single strategy for developing rural areas. In some cases also, rural needs have changed faster than programs have adapted to keep pace.

USDA rural programs must adjust to the changes in rural America. Today only two percent of the U. S. population live on farms and fewer than nine percent of the rural labor force farm. Nonfarm industries predominate in most rural areas. Despite these changes the Task Force observed, the department's attention remains heavily concentrated on the agricultural sector of the rural economy.

The Task Force prepared a June 30, 1989, report to the Secretary of Agriculture, ***A Hard Look at USDA's Rural Development Programs***, in which it proposed eighteen recommendations.

The recommendations have four themes: (1) clarifying USDA's commitment to rural development, (2) strengthening coordination among USDA's rural programs, (3) enhancing USDA's capacity for strategic action, and (4) improving USDA's ability to implement its rural programs.

The Task Force's five concluding recommendations focused on improving USDA's ability to implement rural programs. One of these recommendations was that USDA strengthen the resources of RIC, encouraging its use among USDA staff, and requiring that RIC summarize and report its information requests to a rural policy council to assist in identifying emerging rural issues.

As a result of RIC's high-level visibility, its success as a joint agency information center, and its support from the USDA Rural Revitalization Task Force,

NAL is planning to invite Secretary Yeutter to visit RIC and see the operation first hand. In addition to high-level USDA support and visibility, RIC is also receiving Congressional support.

In August the Senate passed Senate Bill 1036 known as the Rural Revitalization Act of 1989 by voice vote. This Bill was proposed and nurtured by Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy. The Act is designed to address two major financial problems in rural America. First, the lack of capital for small business. Second, rural infrastructure needs for improved telecommunications for educational opportunities, health care, and business, and rural infrastructure needs for water and sewer systems.

Title IV of the Act aims to improve the effectiveness of the Extension Service efforts to provide competitive business development and management.

Title V of the Act authorized USDA to expand RIC's mandate to that of a National Rural Assistance Information Center Clearinghouse. The purpose of the clearinghouse would be to distribute information and data to any industry, organization, or government agency, on request, about federal, state or local programs regarding programs assisting rural America, including information on job training, education, health care, and economic development programs. The Bill would increase the involvement of the National Agricultural Library in collecting and disseminating information on rural development. The Bill also authorizes $500,000 annually for this additional responsibility.

In spite of RIC's brief fifteen months existence on the national scene, it has been involved in many visible USDA activities. RIC hopes that this kind of visibility and department-level participation in rural development initiatives will continue and that RIC activities will continue to favorably impact USDA's rural program.

INFORMATION ACCESS IN RURAL AREAS

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In a perceptive recent analysis, Don Dillman and associates summarize a growing concern among supporters of rural development who see cause for optimism in the dawning of the information age. They say:

> The information age, with its microcomputers, facsimile machines, fiber optics, digital telephone switches, and related paraphernalia, has been heralded as promising an end to the tyranny of rural space. Distance from centers of population and commerce has long kept rural people and their businesses at the ends of the production and distribution lines. They were the last to get market information and the least able to deliver goods and services with any speed. Information technologies are seen as having the potential to overcome these problems.
>
> That promise may go unfulfilled, however. The problem of creating rural jobs in today's information-based service economy is as much social and cultural as it is technological and economic. The physical barriers of distance can perhaps be overcome. But without a modernized telecommunications infrastructure and sophisticated workforce, and a wider perspective of markets than just nearby communities, rural jobs and businesses will find little relief. Furthermore, the new technologies offer the opportunity to draw rural jobs to urban areas as well as draw urban jobs to rural areas (Dillman et al., 1989:21).

Consider the implications of some of the key phrases in this assessment - "the tyranny of rural space," "the potential to overcome these problems," the "promise ... unfilled," and "rural jobs to urban areas." In my remarks on information access in rural areas, I want to elaborate and build upon these themes and I want to go beyond them some what to suggest an agenda for facing the challenge of the information age in rural areas. I will agree with the assessment that the information era with all its wonderful paraphernalia is a "double-edged sword" for rural communities, one that can cut either way. First, I will comment on some enduring characteristics of rural areas and recent rural trends that create the problems new information technologies

and the new opportunities of the information age might relieve. Second, I want to explore the promise of a better future for rural areas and outline an optimistic scenario of the effects of the new space-shrinking technologies. Third, I will turn to a discussion of threats to rural well being in the information age. Fourth, and finally, I will discuss approaches to meeting this challenge and ways of intervening to resolve the rural crisis that current trends reveal.

Rural Access: The Social Cost of Space

Access to the essential resources for meeting the daily needs of people is the first requisite for maintaining a community and ensuring social well being anywhere, any time. Distance is perhaps the most enduring characteristic of the quality we call "rural," and distance impedes access. Access is essential for well being, and ruralness impedes access; these simple facts form the core of the rural problem, a problem found in virtually all societies and all regions. While there certainly are exceptions to the general pattern, the overall picture, worldwide, is one of relative disadvantage in access to resources associated with ruralness of location.

In modern society, this has always been the case, although in times gone by the drag effect of distance on access perhaps was off-set by other characteristics of rural communities. Relative isolation in small settlements is not so bad when combined with the warmth and security of close-knit family and community networks and with a more or less self-sufficient local economy. Perhaps it was thus in the past. At least that is the image many of us have about life in the country in the "good old days." According to sociological studies in Europe and America early in the twentieth century (Sorokin and Zimmerman, 1929), physical isolation in rural areas often was offset by the cohesion of local social life. One could be in a remote locality and still be embedded in a web of supportive, sustaining relationships. Studies today give a different report on the effects of remoteness. As local residents of virtually all communities have become more dependent on the larger society for meeting many daily needs, and as the ability of local institutions and groups in rural areas to hold the commitments of residents has declined, physical isolation has come to be more closely associated with social isolation than with social cohesion. Isolation is cited,

for example, in recent studies as a possible explanation of the increasingly familiar finding that rural populations have not only high rates of poverty and other material deficits but also high rates of suicide, homicide and psychological distress (Wilkinson, 1984). The social cost of rural space is high and appears to be increasing, not subsiding, with the passage of time.

Three trends during the 1980s call attention to persisting problems of rural communities in an urban-industrial society. First, after a brief turnaround in the 1970s, migration patterns have restored the dominant historical trend of greater urban than rural growth. While population growth is only one characteristic of a community, the rural-urban difference on this characteristic is perhaps the best single indication of the relative abilities of different types of communities to meet the daily needs of their residents. Second, as the promise of a sustained turnaround faded in the late 1970s, familiar rural problems began to surface again in research findings and news reports: problems of poverty and underemployment; a crisis in the financing of agriculture; inadequate services, a deteriorating rural infrastructure for development; social and economic inequality; and problems of the family and community cohesion. Third, even as the evidence of rural problems has accumulated, observers in Europe and America have noted an absence of sustained efforts to understand and eradicate the causes of these problems at the national level. Many rural people and communities are being left behind in the 1980s, just as they were said to have been left behind in reports on rural poverty and other problems before the 1970s (Wilkinson, 1986; Commission of the European Communities, 1988).

Historically, people and communities in rural areas of modern societies have been left behind because rapid economic growth has been concentrated in large industrial cities. Displaced by advances in agricultural technology, rural workers and their families migrated to cities by the hundreds of thousands to take advantage of industrial jobs; and those who could not do so, literally were "left behind." As national economies became predominantly industrial and world culture became essentially urban, many small communities found themselves at a disadvantage in meeting needs of residents. A small, localized economy no longer could be self-sufficient. Larger numbers would be needed to justify and sustain modern

community services and facilities. Residents would have to commute to distant centers for jobs and services, or they would have to make do with the lesser resources available in the rural setting. Sparsity of settlement and distance from the centers of economic development and power produced a rural condition that the sociologist/economist Carl Kraenzel (1980) labeled "the social cost of space."

The phase of concentrated growth of large cities was followed, beginning in the 1950s, by a period of metropolitan expansion, as the economic and political power of the centers began to be used to organize and manipulate resources in the surrounding countrysides. Suburban development of housing, satellite developments in industry, and other aspects of this expansion drew many small towns and rural areas directly into large urban fields. Beyond these fields, the cost of space became even greater for many rural residents.

The cost of rural space has a number of dimensions (Wilkinson 1986). One is an unstable economic base, as shown by recent events in agriculture and in the manufacturing industries that have developed in rural areas. Another is the limited range of services that can be supported in public or private sectors. In addition there is evidence that rurality often depresses the ability of a local population to organize for effective collective action, in contrast to the image of close-knit rural communities acting together for the common good in times past.

Another factor is the tendency for profit-seeking firms to move into and out of rural areas, taking many of the benefits of development with them but leaving many of the costs of development to be endured by the community. Although exploitation of rural resources has a long history (e.g., in mining and lumbering areas), new technologies can greatly increase the potential for outside manipulation to have devastating effects on rural well-being.

Rural dependency on increasingly mobile outside investments has several more or less obvious consequences. As the investments come and go (in search of profits in national or world systems), so do the jobs and incomes of rural workers. Local economic instability can result from concentration of a single sector of a production process in a given rural community, a common practice among multi-site firms. This makes the community vulnerable to shifts in the importance of the sector in the

firm's overall operation; and it limits the diversity--and thus the stability--of the local economic base. Dependency also increases the probability that profits will leave the community quickly. In many rural areas, the past two decades have been marked by dramatic and potentially disruptive boom-and-bust cycles associated with highly mobile industrial investments (e.g., in mining).

The decade of the 1980s, by almost any standard of evaluation, in fact has been an unmitigated disaster for many rural communities around the world. In industrial nations the decade began with a deep economic recession, one with more harmful effects in rural settlements than in urban ones overall, and the long slow recovery over the decade has been longer and slower in the countryside than in the cities. The result is that in the 1980s, rural people have experienced one of the longest and most severe economic declines relative to urban people in modern history. Upheavals in agriculture, forestry and mining, instability in rural manufacturing, a rural lag in capturing the benefits of the shift to a service economy and a return to a rate of migration from rural areas to cities at the level of the 1960s characterize this decade. The poverty gap between rural and urban portions of the population is high, and since 1980 that gap has increased. For example, in the United States the rural poverty rate is now one and one-half times the urban rate (Brown and Deavers, 1987). It is obvious from these and many other trends that rural communities are not catching up; indeed, on many indicators of economic and social well being rural communities overall are falling even further behind in the 1980s than in many previous decades. Some observers, in fact (e.g., Parker et al., 1989:3), argue that crisis intervention will be required if rural areas are to survive economically and socially in the 1990s.

The Promise of the Information Age

Clearly, the potential for a "new deal," a new "shake" for rural areas is at hand in the information age.

What is this information age? As historians and anthropologists will attest, there is little new about the importance of information to human survival and adaptability. We have been substituting information for labor, and other sources of

power, even for capital, over most of the course of evaluation of modern society. What is new, according to leading students of the information age, is the speed with which this substitution is now occurring.

According to Dillman (1985), the essence of the information age is massive increases in the following:

1. The speed by which communication can occur between one place and another.
2. The amount of information that can be transmitted from one point to another.
3. The fidelity (quality) of long distance communications.
4. Miniaturization of computer and communication technologies.
5. The capability to send as well as receive information from virtually any place on earth.
6. The range of people and places with which we can have contact.
7. The relative importance of telecommunicated transmissions compared to transactions requiring physical movement as determinants of people's behavior.
8. The ability to select from large data banks the precise information needed for making decisions.
9. The ability through artificial intelligence to conceptualize problems and possible solutions in ways beyond individual human capabilities.
10. The relative importance of information versus labor and energy in production of goods and services.
11. The rate of potential change in who interacts with whom for what purpose.

In many ways, the information age is already here and its effects are already being noticed by us all. The fact that the essence of this phenomenon is the speed of change, however, means that the full impact is yet to come--especially in rural communities where the pace of change typically is slower than in more urbanized

areas.

From the standpoint of rural well being, what these developments promise is the capacity to reduce or even to eliminate the cost of rural space. New telecommunications developments could reduce the economic cost of space, that is, the cost of delivery of goods and services and the cost of acquiring the information necessary to survive economically in today's world markets. Similarly the information age can reduce the social cost of space by creating new structures of social interaction and breaking up the "place chains" that bind people to specific localities. New developments in transportation and long-distance communications make it possible for rural people to participate in the mainstream of modern urban society without giving up the benefits of living in rural areas. In other words, the information age promises to relieve the age-old effects of the most enduring source of rural problems, the effects of distance on access to resources for meeting the needs of people.

New technologies -- personal computers, fiber optics, digital switching, integrated networks for sending voice and video images on the same telephone lines, facsimile transmission, cable television, inexpensive narrow cast television delivery of specific programs and data, satellite linkages, electronic mail, electronic bulletin boards, instant market and weather information, and many others (Cleveland, 1985)-- coupled with new organizations and new organizational strategies (e.g. the information-age library) could transform rural communities from isolated outposts in the mass society into highly advantageous sites for living in the information society.

Indeed a new rural economy has been emerging in recent years and some observers see in contemporary trends the potential for at least some of the promised benefits of the information age to come to fruition in rural areas in the 1990's. As Blakely and Bradshaw (1985) point out, the days of rural reliance exclusively on traditional industries such as agriculture and mining and related natural-resource based industries, has long since ended, and the successor to these -- manufacturing, the dominant rural employer since the 1950's -- is giving ground rapidly to service employment and employment in information-based industries. The future, they say, can be bright for rural areas because economic power no longer depends on either

natural resources or concentration of labor, but on human resources. Human skill and creative human organization, not location or natural endowments, will determine the distribution of well being in the future, from this optimistic viewpoint.

Parker et al. (1989), in a recent report on rural telecommunications needs in rural areas, comment on "a new web of telecommunication dependencies" altering employment opportunities in the countryside and the ways rural businesses and service organizations operate:

> As rural economic activities and social services become more information intensive, they rely more heavily on access to high quality telecommunications facilities. Some businesses now simply cannot operate without these telecommunications links. For example, when a pharmaceutical wholesaler began requiring retailers to place orders via online computers rather than via mail or telephone, it put new pressure on rural pharmacies to install computer modems. Similarly, a machinery dealer was required by his manufacture/distributor to install a direct computer connection at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars.

Most striking, as many observers note, is the overall breadth of change now occurring in virtually all areas of business and related social life in small towns and rural areas.

The new rural economy is being molded by fundamental changes in the society at large that substantially reduce the influence of spatial location on many economically important activities. Examples abound in recent literature (e.g. Dillman et al., 1989). Job creation has become uncoupled from natural resource industries. The proportion of the labor force directly involved in manufacturing has declined sharply in modern societies over the past half century and is likely to decline even more in the future. By the end of the century, as many as two thirds of American and European workers are expected to be in knowledge, information and education jobs--writing software, answering 800 telephone numbers, and processing various forms such as insurance claims and bills for goods, activities that can be carried on almost anywhere, rural or urban, in the information age. New jobs are increasingly being created by small, rather than large organizations. In fact, large organizations worldwide are in a period of downsizing, contracting many aspects of their production and other operations to smaller units, located far from headquarters. Dillman et al.

(1989) report that forty percent of equipment expenditures in the United States now go to telecommunications and computer equipment compared to 20 percent ten years ago and that by 1995, 9 out of 10 white-collar jobs are expected to involve a computer work station. There is no good reason why this equipment and these jobs would be concentrated in cities, and indeed they are not being concentrated in the centers of cities, as in the past, but in outlying areas instead. With these trends, it does not take much argument to convince one that the opportunity is at hand to reduce, and perhaps even to do away with that venerable rural problem, the social cost of space.

Consider, if you will, the vision of a rural-urban society where the social cost of space is not a significant factor in well being, a society in which rural and urban people alike would have access to good jobs, services, equality and community stability. The problems associated with urban scale are but the other face of the social cost of rural space. The information age holds the promise of a better distribution of population toward an optimal mix of the benefits of scale and smallness, and from this a better society could be developed for all.

Unfortunately, however, nothing in the current trends and nothing about the new technologies assure us that this promise will be realized. The odds are at least equally good that the information age will cause rural communities to fall more behind in the future than in the past on indicators of economic and social well being. We must turn the sword over, as it were, to consider the threat to rural well being posed by this wonderful thing, the information age.

The Threat of the Information Age

The threat to rural well being in the information age has several parameters. There are rural problems that impede rural participation in the almost revolutionary changes of this era, such as (see Dillman et al., 1989) the problems of inadequate rural telecommunications, inadequate rural organization and rural reluctance to embrace rapid changes; and there is the growing threat of manipulation and exploitation of rural resources (Wilkinson, 1989). These threats dampen optimism that the new space-shrinking technologies will close the gap in well being between rural and urban settlements in modern societies.

First, the inadequacy of rural telecommunications is well documented in recent literature (Parker et al., 1989) although reasons for this inadequacy deserve much more study than received, especially in the social sciences. Rural residents, businesses and groups have less access than their urban neighbors to personal computers, fiber optic lines, digital switches and the other items that comprise the basic technology of the information age. Party lines are common in rural telephone networks, but party lines will not accommodate modems, fax, or cellular (mobile) phones. Moreover, rural networks tend to have old and outdated equipment and connections; and even with these, a call to the nearest town often requires payment of a long-distance charge. It is quite clear that new information technologies and systems are not being deployed as rapidly in rural areas as in urban areas.

Second, there are problems of rural organization. Ruralness depresses the probability that specialized organizations will form in a local population to meet special needs or to solve special problems. Specialized occupations and groups are needed to take full advantage of rural opportunities in the information age. Moreover, the new linkages between individuals and information sources in the larger society could weaken local relationships. Local businesses could suffer, for example, if goods and services are exchanged directly through such linkages with no role for local firms or groups. The potential for mobilizing for collective action at the local level also could suffer as a result of strong but fragmented ties of individuals and groups to the outside. Such problems in local social organization reduce the potential to take advantage of rural opportunities in the information age.

Third, there are problems of rural acceptance of new information technologies and of the new social patterns they encourage and demand. Traditional rural resistance to change is well known, and the tendency for innovations to develop more often in heterogeneous urban settings than in relatively homogeneous rural populations is easily understood. Moreover, there is the danger that rural education will lag behind urban education in teaching the technical skills and in building the global awareness necessary for full participation in the information age.

Fourth, there is the issue of exploitation of rural resources: new information technologies for whom? Whose interests drive these new developments? It is

apparent that much of the direction of the course of social change in rural areas responds not to the needs of rural communities but to the interests of urban-based investors who want to profit from rural resources. The information society speeds the potential flow of capital into and out of particular areas. This means jobs are mobile; they come and go with investment decisions and management decisions that have little if anything to do with protection or enhancement of rural well being (see Wilkinson, 1989). The result can be rural dependency, instability of rural community economies and continued rural underdevelopment -- depending upon whose interests are considered as new information technologies are deployed.

These threats cast a cloud of doubt over the rural promise of the information age. They underline the possibility, and perhaps the probability, that rural areas will fall behind even more in the information age than in the past. This is an ominous prospect because the social cost of falling behind now, given the speed of change and the enormous power of information in years ahead, can be much greater than in the past.

Meeting the Challenge

What would it take to ensure that the promise of the information age will be realized in rural areas? Parker et al. (1989) focus on telecommunications policy. Government, they say (1989:xii), should:

> Encourage rural telephone carriers to provide affordable access to telecommunications and information services comparable to those available in urban areas.
>
> Specifically, . . . policy should strive to:
>
> 1. Make voice telephone service available to everyone.
> 2. Make single-party access to the public switched telephone network available to everyone.
> 3. Improve the quality of telephone service sufficiently to allow rapid and reliable transmission of facsimile documents and data.
> 4. Provide rural telephone users with equal access to competitive long distance carriers.

5. Provide rural telephone users with local access to value-added data networks.

6. Provide 911 emergency service with automatic number identification in rural areas.

7. Expand mobile (cellular) telephone service.

8. Make available touch tone and custom calling services, including such services as three-way calling, call forwarding and call waiting.

9. Make voice messaging services available via local phone calls.

10. Help rural telephone carriers to provide the telecommunications and information services that become generally available in urban areas.

These are among the prime technical requirements, but there are others. In a broad sense, the rural problem of the information age is less of a technical one than a political one. Intervention obviously is needed to protect rural interests in the information age and to develop rural skills and organization to make effective use of the new technologies.

Building rural capacity and organization for the information age will require new and expanded roles for some established rural institutions. Extension education, for example, can play a crucial role in the future by interpreting and giving local utility to the massive body of information on virtually all facets of rural life now available from national and international sources. Schools in rural areas must meet the challenge of teaching new technical skills and increasing the awareness of people of the worldwide linkages that affect their lives. Libraries can be, and in my opinion they should be, the key nodes in community-based strategies to take advantage of opportunities in the information age. This means these old institutions--extension, the schools and libraries--must move out of the fringe position they often occupy in community life and into the center of political and economic decision making. Certainly, this is a formidable task, and the means of financing expanded roles of these institutions will be hard to find. The alternative, however, if such roles are not expanded by community-based and community-oriented institutions, is that they will be bypassed and ignored as individuals and special-interest groups articulate their

own linkages to outside sources of the information they need. Local organizations must be in the lead if the promise and not the threat of the information age is to be realized in rural areas.

The rural crisis in the information age is not something in the future to be faced at our leisure; it is here upon us. A crisis, by definition, is a turning point, a time of uncertainty and anxiety but also a time of great opportunity. Meeting this crisis requires purposive intervention, otherwise extant trends will likely produce a decrease rather than an increase in the well being of people in rural areas. Intervention at many levels--in policy, in practice and in science--will be needed to secure the benefits of the information age for the rural communities which are now being "left behind" once again in an increasingly urban world.

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OF RURAL LIBRARIANSHIP

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TECHNOLOGY AND THE RURAL LIBRARY

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It is quite likely that for someone working in a rural or small library, reading the current library literature could be a rather depressing activity. Someone reading the current literature would be left with the impression that every library in the country is filled with CD-ROMs, online databases, and the problems of an online catalog. A survey recently completed with the Center for the Study of Rural librarianship, Clarion University of Pennsylvania, showed that this is not necessarily the case in America's rural libraries.

For purposes of research, rural libraries were defined as public libraries with population service areas of under 25,000 as published in the 1989 American Library Directory. The survey sample was selected by using the first public library to meet the definition on every tenth page. When a page did not have a library within the definitional limits, the page was not used, and I progressed on to the next ten pages and proceeded from there. This yielded a sample size of 168 libraries.

The survey was developed and pre-tested among other studies in the College of Library Science. Once it was finalized, the survey was printed and prepared for mailing. These were mailed on Wednesday, March 7, 1990. It was asked that responses be returned by March 31, 1990, but late responses were accepted. All responses received by April 23, 1990 were included in the survey results.

All total, 101 of the initial 168 surveys were returned. Of these, four libraries indicated they were not rural in nature, and their responses were greatly appreciated, but not included in the analysis of survey results. This left 97 surveys that were included in the survey analysis.

An effort was made to include all geographic regions of the country. All states, except Hawaii, were included in the survey sample. Unfortunately, not all states had

respondents. However, those responses that were received did tend to reflect general geographic regions of the nation.

It should also be noted that not all the numbers throughout the survey add up to the 97 usable responses, or even to 100%. This is because not all questions were answered on all the responses, and some respondents provided more than one answer for some questions. All respondents were guaranteed anonymity for their answers. Therefore, survey results are reported only in numerical terms with no effort to identify names or geographic locations.

Finally, a search of the literature yielded no previous studies to either support or refute the findings of this survey. In fact, there seemed to be very little at all on what technology is available and in use in America's rural libraries today.

Perhaps the most surprising thing that showed up in the survey was the response to questions 21 and 25. Both of these questions dealt the M.L.S. degree. Question 21 asked if the respondent held an M.L.S., and of the 94 people answering this question, 36 or 28% responded yes. Another 3, or 3%, responded that they hold Bachelor's degrees in Library Science. These two figures combined, would indicate that nearly half of the people in positions of authority in rural libraries have received some type of formal training in library science.

Further, many of the libraries reported that they employed more than one "professional" librarian. Of the 36 libraries employing Masters librarians, 10 employ more than one. In fact, two of the libraries reported that they employ four librarians with their Masters degree.

One wonders then, if this is somehow related to the fact that 69 respondents indicated that they do at least some of their own original cataloging. Only 34 respondents said they subscribe to any type of cataloging service. Many of these said this is done for them by their regional library system.

Also, it is encouraging to note that 33 people indicated that they use some type of computer program to assist in their cataloging. The software ran the gamut of possibilities. Although the most popular program was Bibliofile, a large number of libraries use of computer capabilities of their regional systems to do their cataloging. It is interesting to point out that two libraries indicated that they have access to OCLC for

cataloging purposes. Fifty-four libraries responding to this question said they do not use any type of automation for their cataloging needs.

Eleven of the libraries answering the survey indicated that they do belong to a cataloging system. Of these four said they belong to OCLC; four belong to a regional cataloging system; and one library said they use OCLC for interlibrary loan purposes. The other 73 libraries answering this question said that they do not have access to any system of this type.

In other areas of technical services, nine libraries said they automated systems for acquisitions, and eight libraries have automated inventory control systems. A few libraries have automated their bookkeeping and interlibrary loans. However twenty libraries report that their circulation systems are currently automated.

This last figure is particularly amazing when the date from question two, who shows that only ten of the responding libraries have automated their catalogs. Of these, six continue to maintain their card catalog. The others have either eliminated, or are eliminating this traditional mainstay of the library. An online, interactive catalog is the popular choice, with CD-ROM the second choice.

Of these ten, two do not have public access to the catalog terminals. In these libraries, library staff will perform catalog searches for the patrons. Five libraries provide patrons informal instruction in the use of the online catalog. Five libraries said their systems are self-explanatory in nature, and therefore patrons are left to instruct themselves in the use of the catalog. Two libraries provide the patron with printed instructions, and one library offers all of the above as well as formal instruction.

The earliest that any of these catalogs described above was automated in 1984. Many of the libraries that are not currently automated do plan to do so within the next several years. Seven plan to complete their automation this year (1990), with another seven planning completion in 1991. The farthest into the future that any libraries projected the possibility of gaining an automated catalog was 1999. Two libraries are aiming for this somewhat distant date. Six libraries plan to automate their catalogs, but were unable to provide any type of time frame for the completion of the project.

Of those libraries that have automated, five of them paid for it through local funds; three used federal funds to finance the automation; one used money received from

their regional consortium; and the final library used state funds. It may be interesting to note that none of the libraries used money received through donations, and none of those planning to automate in the near future indicated that this would be done with donated money.

In the area of reference and providing patrons with access to various database services, 79 libraries responded. Ten libraries said that they provided access to a database within their own library. Additionally, twenty-five other libraries said that they offer access to a database service through another library or library system. This means that 48% of the libraries participating in the survey, have some type of arrangement to provide patrons this increasingly important service. Twenty-one libraries offer online database searches, whether within the library or from somewhere else. Eight libraries offer CD-ROM searches. These are all done with the library. Some libraries offer both online and CD-ROM searches.

Although these are extremely expensive services for small and rural libraries to offer, most do not have any type of user fee in return for the search. A few libraries charge a portion of the cost, and an even smaller number charge the user the full cost of performing the search.

The money to finance the maintenance and operation of the database services is almost evenly split between state and local funds. User fees and money provided by the federal government pick up the remaining slack.

DIALOG is easily the most used of the databases offered in these libraries. Although other choices include BRS, OCLC and Wilsonline, they are not nearly as popular as DIALOG. Most searches are performed by professional staff, whether within the library itself, or at a different library. Very few libraries allow end user searching. However, one library did report that they have a very few patrons who are skilled searchers in their own right. These patrons are allowed to search on their own.

Question 15, which asked the number of searches performed in a week, leaves the nagging question about how necessary it may be for a small or rural library to provide this service themselves. Sixteen of the twenty-three responses to this question report that five or fewer searches are performed in a given week. One library even reported that they perform less than one search a year. Although three libraries reported

performing over 20 searches in a week, it might be less expensive for those libraries performing fewer than ten searches a week, to continue (or begin) to receive these services from a larger, cooperative library, preferably within their regional system.

There does not seem to be a correlation to the main emphasis of library services and the amount or type of technology available or in use in the libraries. Although many libraries marked more than one response, 18% of the responses indicated an emphasis in providing informational services. On the other hand, 53% of the responses indicated an emphasis on proving materials for adult recreation and hobbies, in particular adult fiction. Surprisingly, only 39% of the responses listed children's services and programs among their main emphases. A few libraries indicated that they attempt to serve all areas of interest equally. Four percent listed other areas as the main recipient of services.

From studying the data provided by this survey, it seems as though rural libraries are trying to provide their patrons with many of the same services and advancements that their urban counterparts take almost for granted. Comments written onto the survey form indicated that most of these libraries would like to offer more in the way of technology, especially in the form of an automated catalog. However, funding was the number one problem these libraries face. Yet, the very nature of ruralness guarantees that these libraries will always have smaller budgets to use in providing nearly equal services as urban libraries.

This is exacerbated as we begin to see urban dwellers begin to move back to the small towns and rural communities. These people often arrive expecting to receive the same services and benefits as they did in their more urban settings. This tends to push the local library into providing many of the services and technologies.

The smaller population base means that there will be fewer individuals available from whom taxes can be collected. This, in turn, means that there will be fewer dollars available for the library to use.

Although it would be helpful if generalizations could be made from the data collected in this survey, there were no connections strong enough between any of the questions that any such assumptions could safely be made.

It would be profitable if further study could be done to look for a connection

between membership in a regional library system and the amount of current technology available in libraries. This seemed to be the strongest connection that appeared throughout the survey. There was no inquiry into system membership, but many of those libraries which indicated they either had an automated catalog or did online cataloging also indicated membership in such a system. However, without specifically asking this question, it would be unfair to the other respondents to make such a generalization. It is quite possible that other libraries, which do not have access to these services, may also belong to some type of regional system.

Another, larger, more comprehensive survey may also yield insight into a connection between a staff member with an M.L.S. and either the presence of current technology. There was no such correlation present in this study--four out of the ten libraries with an automated catalog had a degreed staff member. A larger group would be needed before such a generalization could be made. Four out of ten is not a large enough group that this could be assumed to be true throughout the country.

A larger survey might also provide insight into any possible correlations that would be related to geographic location. Although all states, except Hawaii represented in the sending of surveys, no responses were received from Alabama, Louisiana, or Maine, and the response from Nevada arrived too late to be included in the survey results. Another difficulty that would need to be overcome in a follow-up survey of this type, is that the method of drawing the sample meant that those states with a large number of libraries received more surveys than states with a smaller number of libraries. Many states received only one survey. A follow-up study that was looking for a geographic connection would need to take this into account and ensure that all states and areas received equal representation.

This exploratory survey provided a great deal of information itself. It proves that most rural libraries do not generally have the same technological advances at their disposal as their urban counterparts. It also shows that a surprisingly large number of librarians in these rural libraries have their professional degrees. Finally, most importantly, it generally shows that these librarians would like to offer these services to their patrons but lack the funding and resources to their patrons. The fact that their patrons are taking advantage of these services when offered also shows that a need does

exist in this area. The next step is to determine how these deficiencies can be eliminated, and the rural library made equal to the urban library in the quality and types of services offered.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

Please mark the most appropriate answer.

1. What is the main emphasis of your library's services?

   51 Recreational/Hobbies (Adult)

   38 Children's Services/Programs

   17 Informational Services

   4 Other. Please specify.

   16 All

The next questions deal with your library's catalog. Please mark the most appropriate answer.

2. Do you have an automated catalog?

   10 Yes (please skip to #4.)

   87 No

3. Do you plan to automate your catalog in the foreseeable future? Please indicate year, and continue with the next section on databases.

   We plan to automate our catalog in 199_.

   53 Plan not to automate.

   7 1990

   7 1991

   4 1992

   2 1993

   3 1994

   3 1995

   ___ 1996

   ___ 1997

   ___ 1998

   2 1999

   6 Unknown

was five years. The second most frequently cited number was ten years, and then one year. Some respondents wrote that they had several terms in office.

The number of individuals on the board was tallied. For the small, medium, and large libraries, the average was five per board, and for the ungrouped board the average was split between five and six. A few of the boards from larger libraries had over ten trustees, and one medium-size library had 25 trustees.

Another question dealt with whether or not there was an initial orientation or training when the respondent first joined the ranks of the local board of trustees. Of the boards from smaller libraries 66 percent replied no, from the medium-sized libraries 56 percent replied no, from the larger libraries 63 percent replied yes. From the ungrouped libraries, respondents were divided 50/50 over having received initial training.

Another item asked about the availability of trustee candidates, should a vacancy develop. The choices were, many willing candidates, a select few, or difficult to find. The smaller library boards apparently have a greater difficulty finding replacements, and a greater number of trustees checked this category than the select few category. The other groupings did not indicate having difficulty finding new candidates.

When asked where the board would turn for help on issues of which it was unsure, there was a variety of answers. The majority of the replies from all groups indicated that they would contact their system library headquarters or a consultant employed there, except the ungrouped libraries where the director and other libraries were listed as choices. A significant number of replies from the larger-sized libraries indicated in second place, that they would contact the New York State Library Association, where the smaller libraries were more apt to contact the director of their own library or even the village board.

Opinions, Beliefs, and Behaviors

Of those responding, 85 percent described their level of involvement with trustee activities as active. The rest checked occasionally active, while no one checked inactive. Perhaps the inactive trustees were the 126 who did not respond to the

3 Federal funds

1 State funds

5 Local funds

____ Local donations

1 Consortium

The next questions are about databases. Please mark the most appropriate answer.

9. Do you provide your patrons with databases?

10 Yes

66 No

10. If not, do you have an agreement with another library to meet these needs?

25 Yes

41 No (Please skip to #17.)

11. What type of databases do you provide?

21 Online

8 CD-ROM

12. Which service(s) do you use? Please check all that apply.

10 DIALOG

____ ORBIT

1 BRS

2 H. W. Wilson

4 PAC

2 Other. Please specify. Regional Library System

1 OCLC

1 GEAC

2 InfoTrac

13. Do you charge the user:

4 The full cost of the search

7 A partial cost of the search

16 Nothing

14. Are these services primarily paid for through:

4 Federal funds

11 State funds

9 Local funds

5 User fees

15. About how many searches do you do a week?

16 0 - 5

3 6 - 10

1 11 - 15

____ 16 - 20

1 21 - 25

2 More than 25

16. Who conducts the searches?

12 Staff members with an M.L.S.

7 Other full-time staff

2 Part-time staff

____ Volunteer staff

1 User

2 All except volunteer

The next questions are about technical services. Please mark the most appropriate answer.

17. Do you use any type of automation in your cataloging activities?

33 Yes. Please specify.

(5) Regional Library System
(6) Bibliofile
(4) Unspecified
(1) BIP Plus
(3) MARC IV
(4) Quick Card
(2) Librarian's Helper
(1) CLSI
(2) Dynix
(1) Ultra Card MARC
(1) Avant
(2) OCLC
(1) MicroMARC

54 No

18. Do you do your own original cataloging, or do you subscribe to a cataloging service?

69 Original cataloging

34 Subscribe to a service

19. Do you belong to an online cataloging system, like OCLC?

11 Yes. Please specify system.

(4) Regional Library System
(4) OCLC
(1) Marcive
(1) Maryland Milnet

73 No

20. Do you use an automated system for any of the following? Please check all that apply.

9 Acquisitions

7 Inventory Control

20 Circulation

2 Other. Please specify. ILL

3 Bookkeeping

1 Word Processing

1 Serials

Miscellaneous questions. Please mark the most appropriate answer.

21. Do you have an M.L.S.?

36 Yes

55 No

3 B.S. in Library Science

22. How many full-time staff members do you have? ____

(30)	1	(3)	6
(16)	2	(0)	7
(9)	3	(1)	8
(6)	4	(0)	9
(8)	5	(1)	10

23. How many part-time staff members do you have? ____

(22)	1	(2)	7
(23)	2	(1)	8
(13)	3	(1)	9
(6)	4	(3)	10
(8)	5	(1)	18
(6)	6		

24. How many volunteers do you use? ____

(13)	1	(3)	6	(1)	11	(5)	More than 15
(9)	2	(1)	7	(2)	12		
(8)	3	(4)	8	(0)	13		
(6)	4	(0)	9	(1)	14		
(5)	5	(3)	10	(2)	15		

25. How many of your staff members have an M.L.S.?

(26)	1
(6)	2
(2)	3
(2)	4

20

Name _____ Position _____

Library _____ Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

DISTANCE EDUCATION: THE RURAL ROLE OF THE URBAN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROGRAM

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Paper presented at the 1990 Annual American Library Association Conference in Chicago.

The University

Wayne State University is an urban university--located in the Cultural Center of Detroit--near the heart of the city, across from the Detroit Public Library and one block from the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Detroit Historical Museum. Thirty-two thousand, four hundred forty-seven students were enrolled at Wayne State University in Fall 1989. It ranked, by enrollment, 31st in the United States. Ninety-three percent of the students come from Michigan; two plus percent came from other states; five percent are international students; and thirty percent of the student body are minority.

The Library Science Program mirrors the University in some areas. Ten percent of the 350 students are international and minority students. Part-time students compose approximately 80% of the student body in library science. The average age is 38, and approximately 90% are Michigan residents.

Wayne State University is committed to serving the traditional and non-traditional student. The Library Science Program endeavors to serve qualified individuals who are not able to attend a traditionally-delivered, full-time, on-campus program. Problems most often cited by non-traditional students include commitment to jobs/careers, family responsibilities, and distance from campus, which make it difficult or impossible to participate in higher education programs in residence.

Accredited ALA Library Education

Michigan's two American Library Association-accredited master's degree programs in library science are located within 90 miles of each other (The University of Michigan and Wayne State University), leaving a great number of Michigan residents without regional library education opportunities. In the past, the Library Science Program at Wayne State University offered a wide-range of evening classes, weekend classes, intensive classes, and extension classes (within 20 miles of campus) to address the needs of the state for qualified professionals.

An important factor to recognize regarding library schools is that, although they appear regional in nature, their goals and objectives are state-wide and national and the program offered must meet standards enforced by the ALA-Committee on Accreditation. Many schools offer off-campus and on-campus classes.

To address the educational needs of the state, the Library Science Program at Wayne State University offers distance education courses. Classes in metropolitan Detroit have consistently had excellent enrollment. Classes scheduled in Traverse City in Summer 1989 and Fall 1989 have had good enrollment. The offering of classes in Western Michigan, in Grand Rapids, is also proving successful. Traverse City is approximately 261 miles from campus. Grand Rapids, is 154 miles. Both are in areas surrounded by small towns, many with libraries without MSLS-degree librarians. The area, except for the actual site of the cities, may be classified as "rural."

Objectives

In developing Wayne State University's distance education program the following objectives were identified:

- To respond to inquiries and requests for professional education from library directors and employers located in the Grand Rapids and Traverse City areas (the generation of the distance education program).

- To provide graduate library education for students geographically disfranchised from Michigan's ALA-accredited programs.
- To offer M.S.L.S. courses off-campus to address the need for professional librarians in the geographic areas of Western and Northern Michigan.
- To graduate individuals prepared to work in library and information centers located in Western and Northern Michigan.
- To provide leaders in the library and information field for the state of Michigan, and, across the nation and in foreign countries.

The Wayne State University distance education program addresses the needs of non-traditional learners in accessing quality ALA-accredited library and information science education. The program addresses the needs of individuals qualified to do graduate work in library and information science, but constrained by the barriers of time, geography, physical disability, personal responsibilities, and professional commitments generally not faced by the traditional Detroit metropolitan student. Since graduates receive an ALA-accredited M.S.L.S. degree, the distance education program also addresses the renewed (geographically selected) shortage of librarians. The program produces graduates educated and prepared to meet the library and information needs of the nation.

Planning Factors

The distance education curriculum includes components of on-campus and off-campus courses, campus-based lecture/colloquia, and other curricular activities. Examples of these activities include: program colloquia, fall and winter orientations, the Library Science Alumni Association and Library Science Program sponsored Annual Alumni Updates, student recognition receptions, career information sessions, and campus addresses and workshops.

There are numerous reasons for offering courses off-campus--and there are many problems which need to be overcome if courses are to be offered. Some of these include:

- Faculty--do the full-time faculty teach off-campus and on-campus? Off-campus courses require considerably more time in faculty preparation, travel, expenses, student contact, and (often times) generate more faculty

and student complaints. Faculty research may be sacrificed to accomplish away-from-campus-instruction.

- Resources--off-campus resources are very often not on the same level nor in the same volume as on-campus. Close cooperation with libraries in the area is needed to overcome some deficiencies.
- Facilities--are often not the school's own. The school's faculty are visitors and coordination is required to assure that the buildings and classrooms are open, for example on Saturdays, when facilities of the off-campus institution are normally closed; that electricity and air-conditioning are working--because there generally will be no local staff available to ask questions of, or to request services.
- The application, admission, and advisement processes--entail long-distance patience and greater dependence on the mail system. FAX access/installation may be required. An off-campus coordinator may be essential for local contact, liaison, and scheduling of courses. The coordinator often becomes instructor and clerk/staff, as well as the complaint department.
- Textbooks and Reserve Materials--require special handling and advanced planning to arrive in time prior to course instruction, in the expected number, and with payment made to the appropriate office.
- Interlibrary Loan--becomes essential to accomplish research. The purchase of special materials or historical works and backfiles of materials also require consideration.
- Creative Scheduling--weekends, longer Saturday classes, Friday/Saturday weekend classes, and extended class hours and often required to limit and reduce faculty travel and expenses.
- Marketing--is essential. Publicity creates enrollment, or at minimum, inquiry.

- Off-Campus Registration--who does it, and to whom mailed, requires additional mailings, clear instructions, extended registration dates, and prompt follow-up.

Quality Assurance Factors

Quality courses are offered by assuring that quality faculty teach. ALA Committee on Accreditation standards continue to play an active role in the operation of off-campus offerings. Off-campus part-time faculty are required to visit the campus for interviews with the full-time faculty, the Director, and Dean. Instructional meetings, prior to teaching, are required of all potential off-campus faculty. These meetings involve discussions of required items to be covered in syllabi, grading policies, attendance policies, the place of the courses to be taught in the curriculum, and a review of the syllabi, to assure similarity of on-campus and off-campus courses.

Students

Students enrolled in the Grand Rapids and Traverse City courses must also be admitted to the M.S.L.S. or certificate programs, and must meet existing program and university criteria for admission. Visitor status may apply, providing the class has not reached its student limit. Concern is given to the socialization of the individual student into the "Profession" and integration of the student into the program. Students are encouraged to "cluster" enroll in on-campus classes to reduce the costs of travel. The need to offer longer on-campus classes during weekends requires additional furnishings for the student seminar room and lounge (microwave, drink dispenser, etc.)

The best recruiters are enrolled students. Because off-campus students have an intrinsic desire to have their classes continue, they are willing to assist in the recruitment of other students, as well as assist with facilities and resource management. Patience must be exercised in beginning off-campus courses, as individuals desiring to enroll often take a "wait-sand-see" attitude to course
enrollment. The second semester of class offerings may be larger than the first due to the fact that the program may have to prove its stability to students.

The Institution's Commitment

Although addressed last, the one concern which must be determined early in the development of distance education programs is the commitment of the administration of the institution to support the off-campus efforts of the library school. Some universities have decided to offer courses only on-campus, committing limited resources only for on-campus teaching in a effort to reduce costs. Emphasis for some "research" institutions is now centered on those efforts which enhance the reputation of the university and the library school through publications, grantsmanship, and other faculty "research" efforts.

At institutions which are willing to support distance education, the concern may be focused upon providing courses as long as the program is profitable, or at least "breaks-even." With rising tuition costs, 'down-sizing' or faculty, and limited budgets, off-campus programs will face increasing pressure to limit faculty costs, to maximize student enrollment, and to minimize expenses involved in off-campus travel, per-diem, and resources. Expectations of a national declining budget picture for the near future will force library schools and institutions to carefully plan for the maximization of budgets, possibly at the expense of off-campus programs. Although difficult, given careful planning and scheduling, it is possible to provide on-campus and off-campus instruction while the faculty are actively involved in university expectations of teaching research and service.

Conclusion

Finally, it is often perceived that an off-campus/distance education program is easily established, operated, and maintained. Most of these perceptions are held by librarians (often, library directors_ who are disturbed when their public thinks the same of the operation of their libraries. It is not "easy" to provide quality library education to students away from campus sites. Much planning, thought, organization, and communication must occur prior to the final commitment by the institution and the library school to engage in the offering of courses off-campus.

A STUDY OF RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARY PATRONS BY UNOBTRUSIVE OBSERVATION

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Knowledge of patron needs and of the way patrons make use of library services is perhaps the most critical body of information for any librarian attempting to provide service to any user group. It is also likely that of all user groups, that of the public library in general and the rural public library in particular is the most difficult to define. "Planning based on erroneous assumptions about the rural patron is still being made by many library administrators" (Kirks 1989, 38). What are the information needs of rural users? What are the characteristics of these patrons? Who, exactly, are our users? Our nonusers? What can be done to bring more nonusers into the library? And finally, how do our patrons make use of the library? This is a difficult question because, "it is clear that people do not walk into a library--straight to the shelf where their desired book stands--ask a reference question on the way to the circulation desk, check out their book, and exit" (Lang 1987/88, 52). Furthermore, how do use patterns relate to user characteristics? A good deal of survey-based research has been done and is still being done on the subject of characteristics and attitudes of the public library's current and potential user group, and the resulting data are worthy of study. However, it would also be helpful together information on library use through an additional method, in this case by directly observing library-use behavior and certain characteristics of rural public library patrons wherever possible. Such a procedure might provide meaningful new information, as "much of the activity in a public library cannot be found recorded in circulation or reference statistics" (Lange 1987/88, 52). This study has two purposes, first, to add to what is already known about user characteristics, including sex and approximate age of user; and second, to explore in an organized way the uses that are really being made of rural public libraries and attempt to make generalizations about

patron use patterns as well as recommendations for further study.

Background Literature

When examining research relevant to the subject of rural public library users, it is first necessary to acknowledge that rural public libraries are the rule rather than the exception when it comes to discussing public libraries. "Over 80% of the public libraries in the United States can be found in rural areas" (Vavrek 1985, 73). By this definition, "rural" means an area of 25,000 people or fewer. Even using the U.S. Census Bureau's much more strict definition (2,500 or fewer population), still 62% of all public libraries in the U.S. are rural (Vavrek 1985, 73). Parenthetically, though the focus of this study is on public libraries in rural areas, there are various libraries which serve the rural community, including such other rural libraries as school, college and special libraries, as well as state or regional libraries which provide services to the public libraries in terms of such things as interlibrary loan or reference assistance (Houlahan 1984,). "Rural library users," then, are a large group of people with a diverse field of interests. Rural public library users are only slightly fewer and probably equally diverse. For the purposes of this study, it therefore seems fair to apply general public library research to rural public libraries, in certain cases. There are three main reasons for this. First, related to the above discussion, it seems safe to assume that rural public library users will have some things in common with public library users in general, especially in terms of basic service expectations and general user characteristics. Besides being intuitively sensible, some instances of these commonalities are supported by the present study. Second, most broad-based user studies have not specifically excluded rural library users. Third, there has been a scarcity of wide-ranging research on rural libraries and their patrons, with one exception being a state-wide study of rural information needs carried out in Pennsylvania; indeed, "no other state has seen it appropriate to conduct a survey of rural library use." (Vavrek 1990, 4). This general shortage of information on rural library patrons results in the utility of a certain amount of cautious extrapolation from more broad-based studies.

Past research concerning patrons' library use and attitudes toward the library has generally been based on such techniques as surveys distributed at the library concerning

subjects such as user satisfaction (D'Elia and Walsh 1983) and user needs and attitudes toward the library (Vavrek 1990), telephone surveys using randomly selected telephone numbers reaching both users and nonusers (Lange 1987/88; Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship 1990), and mail surveys reaching a specified or random audience. Though "user behavior both in terms of evaluation and use of the library appears to be enigmatic" (D'Elia and Walsh 1983, 132), most user studies are able to contribute to what is known about the public library patron. Moreover, certain patron characteristics are recognized in more than one study (most visibly the fact that the vast majority of public library users are women), and these findings are often also supported by the present study.

Assessing the Information Needs of Rural Pennsylvanians (Vavrek 1990) was important in developing the present project. As has been cited, this study was one of the first to concentrate on the characteristics, information needs, and opinions of rural public library users rather than public library users in general. This project came up with some interesting findings, some of which fit in well with existing research on general public library use. Though the Pennsylvania study was limited in scope to only that state, it would not be overly risky to say that the results have implications for libraries across the United States.

The most easily identified finding in public library use studies deals with the sex of public library users. According to studies, most patrons are women. Vavrek's Information Needs found that 79% of rural public library users were women (10). A 1986 paper reporting on library use in North Carolina in 1971 and again in 1986 found that "the gender distribution of library users hasn't changed since 1971; the user group is still 63% female, 37% male" (Carpenter 1987/88, 24). A Gallup survey found that "frequent library visits are made more often by women" (Wood 1985, 20). Other data (including that from the present study) exist supporting the above-mentioned generalization that a predominate number of users of the public library are women, and throughout the literature there seems to be little to dispute that conclusion. Furthermore, it seems that most public librarians know the same thing intuitively through their day-to-day dealings with patrons. In the words of one researcher, "no public librarian can deny that we serve a lot of women" (Hole 1990, 1).

Other demographic data are less conclusive. Information Needs reported that the

average age of users surveyed was 45.82, with the average female and male user 44 and 51 years of age, respectively (Vavrek 1990, 38, 2). These ages, however, are somewhat inflated due to the fact that the maximum age reported was 501 (38). To employ data from a nonrural library, a 1987 news report on a study of users and nonusers of the Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore found that the median age of users was 38 ("Market Study" 1987, 18). The somewhat lower median user age reported in the Enoch Pratt study may be due to one of two factors, if not both. It is possible that the data error in the Information Needs study caused the median age reported therein to be significantly inflated. It is also possible that a difference in median age does exist between rural and nonrural library users. At the same time, it must be remembered that the Information Needs study was conducted on a statewide basis while the Enoch Pratt study surveyed users and nonusers of one library in one city.

Other studies dealing with age of users and nonusers have manipulated their age statistics differently in order to determine which age group contains the highest percentage of library users. On this basis, the Gallup survey mentioned above found that "respondents age 18-24 years (23%), likely to be still in school, use the library more often than do older respondents (17%)" (Wood 1985, 20). Another researcher found that people in their 30's were the most likely to be library users at 48% (Carpenter 1987/88, 24). In a statistic that encompasses the age groups in both of these studies, a summary report of three individual surveys indicated that "people 50 and over use libraries about half as much as the 18-34 set" (Plotnik 1978, 639). When examining statistics, especially in the above case where similar data are used to answer two different but related questions, it is always necessary to avoid comparing apples to oranges. Besides there being a wide range of survey methods and group of people surveyed (ranging from rural public library users in Pennsylvania by written survey in the Vavrek study to Wood's report on the Gallup poll, which was developed as a nationwide telephone survey of a representative sampling of adults 18 and over), the results mean different things. Though the percentage of younger people saying they use the library may be high, the actual number of such people using the library may appear small due to a smaller sampling of individuals. And conversely, though a lower percentage of older people may use the library, the number of older people using the library may appear quite high because of

a larger sampling. Thus, when computing the average age of the library user, the median age will be higher. Yet overall, if one were to attempt to draw a conclusion concerning use of the public library by age group, it would not be overly risky to conclude that age 40 or thereabouts would represent that average.

There is currently more research being done that will do much in finding out about age groups of rural library users. The results of the national telephone survey about attitudes toward rural public library use presently being conducted by the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship will be especially helpful in investigating this question when those results are published. This study employed randomly selected telephone numbers from nonmetropolitan areas, and grouped respondents according to "user" or "nonuser" as well as gathered information about sex and age group. Thus, it will be possible to directly compare these results about rural library users to those cited above which deal with library users in general. The rural attitudes study may do much in answering the question, dealt with above, as to whether or not the rural patron is really older than his or her urban counterpart.

A third main subject of the present user study, besides the determination of sex and age of the patron, was length of the average library visit. Background literature on this subject was more scanty than that of either of the above considerations. Lange found that "younger users tended to stay longer at the library." However, "it might well be that duration is associated with use patterns rather than user characteristics" (Lange 1987/88, 63). The second of these observations makes sense, although evidence from the present study suggests that the first of these may also be accurate.

The main emphasis of the background literature search for this project was on age and sex of user as well as duration of the library visit. The reason for this is that the researcher was able to investigate these three questions using the method of unobtrusive observation, whereas it would be difficult to determine other user characteristics such as education, involvement in community organizations, and number of books read over a specified period of time through the method of unobtrusive observation. Furthermore, due to constraints of the research method, duration of visit was one of only two use patterns the researcher could accurately record. Though somewhat outside the scope of this project, it is interesting to note some of the other factors researchers believe to be

important in determining how the public library is used and who is using it. Level of education is one such factor, and in general the reports seem to indicate that there is a correlation between education and library use. The study of rural Pennsylvania public library users found that only 7% of those users had less than a high school education (Vavrek 1990, 39), while the Enoch Pratt market study indicates that 21% of users had a college degree while only 8% of nonusers had attained that same level of education ("Market study" 1987, 18). Elsewhere, physical distance from the library appears to be an important factor in patron use of library services. Lange suggests that "residential closeness to the library was related to library use and potential use" (Lange 1987/88, 61), which has much in common with Vavrek's finding that "the consequences of geographical isolation negatively affect both library clients and librarians" (Vavrek 1983, 267). Geographical distance is relative, and the drive across town for the patron in Lange's scenario may be nearly as daunting as is traversing the mountains of western Pennsylvania for the rural patron in Vavrek's model. Yet for whatever group of users the library is serving, it would appear that the library should "be located as close as possible to the home of its target population of users" (Lange 1987/88, 62). One final characteristic of library users to be discussed here appeared in several places throughout the literature, and is interesting because it seems to negate the stereotype of the library user as withdrawn, shy, and "bookish." According to Plotnik, "if one can allow that heavy public library users and heavy book readers are roughly one and the same, which they are" then it is safe to assume of both heavy readers and heavy library users that they "are not reclusive, but, on the contrary, they are the doers in life, plunging into the most activities" (Plotnik 1978, 639). To cite another paper based on the same Leo Burnett study from which Plotnik drew some of his information (along with two other broad-based user studies), it seems that activity is perhaps the most pervasive characteristic of the library user. "Library use is most highly related to activity. An individual who is active in other aspects of life, whether it be community organizations, politics, work, or sports, is also likely to be a library user" (Madden 1979, 81). Besides providing more information on the lifestyles, habits, and opinions of nonusers, moderate users, and heavy users, the Madden paper is also interesting here because it is one of the few studies which specifically excludes rural areas (as well as

inner cities) in order to tailor the information to the needs of a library in a medium-sized community. Nevertheless, other data collected exclusively from rural library users seem to support the conclusion that the generalization of the library user as an active community member can be extended from the metropolitan to the nonmetropolitan setting. In the Information Needs study, it was "discovered that 54% . . . of the respondents surveyed participated in community or social organizations" (Vavrek 1990, 17). Of course there is much other information available throughout the literature of library science on characteristics of the library user and nonuser, and a complete discussion of that topic would go beyond the purpose of this study. Since the background material on the user characteristics to be investigated here has already been briefly reviewed, it is now necessary to discuss the current study itself.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to provide some introductory data in two main areas: who is using the rural public library, and what use patterns seem to exist? The technique of unobtrusive observation was used in order to test data already gathered through user or library staff surveys and to attempt to provide additional information unavailable through other research techniques. For the purposes of this study, five rural public libraries were visited three times, with each visit lasting 55 minutes. One exception to this pattern was the library in New Bethlehem, where the last visit lasted only fifteen minutes. The reason for this makes an interesting comment on transportation in rural areas. As the researcher travelled to the New Bethlehem library, he was forced to follow a loaded log truck up and down the twisting, two-lane mountain road. This delayed the trip to New Bethlehem by at least 20 minutes, and since the library was closing for the day, the visit was curtailed. Each library studied was rural in the sense that no library served a population of over 17,000 (ALA Directory 1989). The five libraries were all located within a region consisting of two counties in northwestern Pennsylvania, and the farthest distance between any two libraries was approximately 30 miles. These were: Clarion Free Library in Clarion, Knox Public Library in Knox, Eccles-Lesher Memorial Library in Rimersburg, New Bethlehem Area Free Public Library in New Bethlehem, and

Rebecca M. Arthurs Memorial Library in Brookville. These libraries were chosen for study because of geographical proximity, and ideally one round of visits could be completed in one day. Visiting hours were arranged in an attempt to make each visit to a library at a different time of day. As will be seen by consulting the visit schedule (Appendix A), that attempt was not as successful as one would have wished, as various hours of business for the libraries as well as problems with the travel schedule prevented this. A note about data collection seems in order here. It would be a mistake to compare the data gathered from one library to that gathered from another. The use of five libraries was only to gain a more widely representative sample or rural library use and no comparison was intended. Furthermore, the shortened visit to the New Bethlehem library would prevent such a thing even if it were desirable.

As discussed above, the method of unobtrusive observation was used. For the most part, this method was successful. All of the libraries except for Clarion had only one main entrance, making it possible to monitor the comings and goings of patrons with relative ease. However, as with any methodology, this one had its drawbacks. The major problem with this type of study is the fact that the researcher cannot watch all the patrons at once. This method works well when relatively few patrons are in the library, but it begins to break down when more than about ten patrons are using the library. This is generally no problem in determining sex of the user, because that judgement has only to be made once. However, it is more complicated when attempting to judge duration of the library visit and what use the patron is making of the library. For example, this study counted a total of 168 patrons using the libraries. However, duration of visit times could only be determined for 149 of those patrons, leaving 19 users for whom there is no data about length of visit. There were other drawbacks and flaws with the design of this study, which will be brought up during later sections of this paper. Despite these problems, however, this project was successful in adding some small amount to what is known about the characteristics and user patterns of rural public library users.

Results

One of the main purposes of this study was to test the idea that most public library users are female, or at least to further explore Vavrek's finding that 79% of the users of rural public libraries in Pennsylvania are women (Vavrek 1990, 10). This study found that of the libraries studied, 61% of the patrons were female (see Appendix A). It should be noted here that children who used the library in the company of an adult (and looked to be under the age of 13) were not grouped according to sex of user. Therefore, the statistics for this group are not figured into the total percentage of the user by sex.

A second purpose of this investigation was to look at the ages of public library patrons. Broken down by both age and sex, women of age 47 and over make up the biggest percentage of library users with 18%. The next largest percentage is for women age 27-46, with 17%. When considering age groups alone, people of over 47 make up the largest group with 29%. The second heaviest user group is people between the ages of 27-46, with 26% (see Appendix A). A most interesting statistic arises, however, if one considers all users below the age of 17 as members of the same user group. In so doing, it seems that people below the age of 17 make up 28% of the population who uses the library. The implications of this will be discussed below.

Duration of library visit was another topic covered in this research project, and data was gathered for 149 of the 168 total patrons studied. The most frequent length of visit for members of both sexes was from 10-20 minutes (30%), while the second most common visit lasted less than five minutes (29%). The third most common visit lasted from 5-10 minutes (18%) (see Appendix B). The most common visit for men was under five minutes (44%), while the most common for women lasted from 10-20 minutes (36%).

The final, and perhaps most elusive and interesting, topic studied in this project had to do with user patterns of public library patrons. User behaviors were noted and then grouped according to nine categories (see Appendix C), and within those categories according to whether that use was single (s) or multiple (m). Single use indicates that the indicated use was the only activity that patron pursued in the library. Multiple use means the patron made use of more than one library service. Thus, all indications of single use within the "Checkout & Return" category relate to

return of materials because checkout is always linked to some other library activity (with the exception of interlibrary loan materials or materials renewal, neither of which was observed). As might be predicted, "Checkout & Return" was a often used service, as was "Other" since that category takes in all other uses not listed. "Video," meaning videotape rental, was surprisingly low and perhaps indicates a flaw in the technique of this study. As for categories which received a high degree of single use, "Magazines & Newspapers" led the way, with "Browsing" and "Copy Machine and Telephone" also showing a significant degree of single use. Interestingly, there was a considerable disparity between the sexes as to single use versus multiple use. Thirty-seven percent of female patrons were single-users, while a surprising 74% of males were single-use patrons. All children of twelve and under who used the library with an adult were considered single-use patrons, mainly because it was observed that often that was the case. Furthermore, it is frequently difficult to tell whether or not a child is actually using a particular library service. Often, children seem to carry whatever activity they are doing to various parts of the library, making it difficult to judge if that constitutes a different use.

Discussion

Since this study was conducted in a limited geographical area of northwestern Pennsylvania, it is not expected that all discussions and conclusions of this study will apply directly to all rural libraries across the United States. This was a small sampling of rural public libraries, and the best one can hope to do with such data is to suggest that some of the things which seemed to be holding true in the five libraries researched might also apply to other libraries existing in similar circumstances. However, certain findings are worth some commentary.

In terms of sex of user, this study revealed few surprises. This subject will be generally dealt within the following discussion concerning age groups of library users.

This study's findings about age groups of library users are within the range of ages other reports have indicated. Since patron age was determined observationally, it is impossible to find an average age of the rural public library user. Age determinations are not likely to be as precise as age groupings gathered by survey,

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because in this study age categorization was based on an educated guess by the researcher. However, one of the strengths of this study is that it attempted to find the age of all the people who used those five particular libraries during those times. True randomness is thereby more likely than in written or telephone surveys which would probably be answered by adults.

The findings here, which indicate that the largest group of library users is composed of people over 47, is supportive of Vavrek's finding that the average female client is 44 and the average male client, 51 (Vavrek 1990, 2). This should be of little surprise, since both studies focused on Pennsylvania rural public libraries. However, another utility of this information is that there seems to be some crossover between what has been found out about rural public libraries and what exists in the literature about nonrural libraries. The Enoch Pratt Library, for instance, found that the median age of the library user was 38 ("Market Study" 1987, 18). The second most active group of users in this study, by age and sex, was females from 27-46. The library user in his, or more likely, her, early 40s or late 30s, then, would seem not to be a strictly rural phenomenon. Because of the type of study this was, it is impossible to comment on the question of whether younger people or older people are more likely to use the library. Since this was a study of library users, not the general public, the question must remain a question.

Two more age groups are of interest here and are derived from combining the statistical data for men and women into one group of users for each age category. In so doing, the following is found: people over 47 make up 29% of the users; those under 17 make up 28%; ages 27-46 account for 26%; and the ages group 17-26 makes up only 18% of the user group. Why are 17 to 26 year-olds the smallest group in the library? It could be due to the fact that this age group encompasses only nine years, while the other age categories are much broader. There is another possibility, however. This may be due to the nature of this group of potential users, not to survey techniques. It is possible that more members of this group exist but are now underserved by the library, or perhaps this lower percentage of users may really reflect the fact that, in terms of percentage, there are fewer people of this age group in rural areas. An analysis of population statistics for Pennsylvania, however,

indicates that for those 18 and those 19-44, Clarion County, in which four of these libraries are located, has above the state average in population, 3.1% compared to 1.8%, and 39% compared to 37% for the two age groups indicated (Pennsylvania Abstract 1986, 14). This would seem to indicate that, unless the population has changed substantially in four years, there may be a user group composed of adults between 17 and about age 30 who are currently underserved. Another group of users that merits special treatment here is those under 17. This will be dealt with in the discussion on user patterns.

Duration of the library visit also merits a short discussion. In general, this study seems to indicate that "younger users tended to stay longer at the library" (Lange 1987/88, 63). As a group, females of under 17 stayed at the library the longest, while men of over 47 spent the shortest time on their library visits (Appendix B). However, men in general had shorter library visits than did women in general. This information need not negate the other suggestion that Lange makes about library use duration, that "duration is associated with use patterns rather than user characteristics" (Lange 1987/88, 63). The reason for this is that men in general also made fewer uses of the library during their visits, so both the fact that the group is composed of men and the fact that men make fewer uses per visit point toward a shorter duration of visit for men.

This automatically leads to the discussion of user patterns and to the first obvious question of why it may be so that men come into the library less often, make fewer uses when they do come in, and have shorter visits than do women. Vavrek suggests seven possible reasons why women make more use of the public library than do men, and here it is appropriate to focus on two of them. First, "men may perceive the library more as a place for women" and second, "women may feel more comfortable using the library because the library staff person tends to be female" (Vavrek 1990, 14). The second of these was supported in the findings of this study, because only one time during the total of 15 visits was there a male staff person working, and even then along with female staffers. There is much evidence, both anecdotal and documentable, to suggest that perhaps libraries are often perceived of as being "women's places." In terms of written, documentable evidence, Hole says

that "we have made public libraries . . . into institutions which are hostile or useless to most males" (Hole 1990, 3). Furthermore, according to some preliminary data from the rural library attitudes study, a random sampling of 460 surveys found that 31 respondents (7%) felt that the public library was best suited to women or to women and children. No respondent felt that the library was best suited to men, although five respondents (1%) thought public library services were best suited to adults in general (Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship 1990). To focus on the anecdotal, during visits to the Rimersburg Library, it was observed that during two out of three visits the library was, besides serving as a source of information, being used as an informal meeting place for women with children. Women were observed to come into the library, and while their children played in the well-equipped children's area, these women chatted with the library staff, browsed fiction, and perhaps read newspapers. During one visit, a large study table was taken up by piles of clip-out store coupons. Women patrons would sit down and leisurely sort through these. It was obvious that this was a comfortable situation for all involved, except for the researcher who must admit to feeling slightly out of place. This is not to demean the Rimersburg Library or its staff, because male patrons also came in during these visits and the staff people seemed to be friendly and helpful; on the contrary. The Rimersburg Library was doing a booming business, and seemed to be well-funded. It appears that the Rimersburg Library has taken the advice of Heasley and Price in determining "what challenges the rural environment present [sic]" and has acted upon those challenges (Heasley and Price 1988, 24).

One more age group should be dealt with here under the discussion of user patterns, and that is the group of individuals under seventeen years of age. Literature which has suggested that there is a good deal of library use for young people seems to be supported by the findings of this survey. At the risk of oversimplification, there seems to be two main types of use within this subgroup. First, there is independent use, generally to do homework. These users are usually in their teems. Second is supervised use, and these patrons are generally younger. Exactly what these users do in the library, however, may be worth future study. Speaking of the definition of "use," for the purposes of this study it was assumed that

any person who went into the library to do anything was a user. The only exception were such individuals as postal and parcel delivery people. Returning to the subject of young library patrons, it seems that the one of the main functions of the rural public library, at least in terms of public opinion, is to provide children's services. Preliminary data from the above-cited rural library attitudes survey indicates that although a significant number of respondents feel the library is best suited to women or women and children, 93 out of 460 survey participants (20%) felt the public library was best suited to children, while another 17 (4%) thought it was best suited to women and children. This means approximately one quarter of the survey participants thought children were the group the library could best serve. One researcher feels that providing children's services to rural areas "merits more attention" because of how important these services are to children (Sheller 1983, 103). Here, however, it would seem that with public perception of the library as a children's place it would be very sensible for the library to pay more perceives the library as failing in its main mission, serving children, then that would lead to a poorer perception of the library and resulting poor funding and poor service. This and the other issues discussed above lead to the following main conclusions and observations.

Conclusions and Observations

- The typical rural library user is female and somewhere around 40 years of age, although there is a healthy number of users under 17.
- Men use the library less than women but they also use the library differently; that is they use fewer library services per visit and stay for shorter periods of time. A good subject for further study would be to explore whether or not this difference is due to the "femininity" of the public library and if so, what libraries should be doing to change that.
- Users from around the age 17 up to about 30 are the least common user group. Since population statistics seem to indicate that this is not due to the fact that there just are not that many people that age living in rural areas, more study could be done to discover what would attract these potential users.
- The strong usage of the rural public library by women and children plus the

attitude that the public library is best suited to serve children and women should not be seen as a problem to solve. Certainly, more ways to attract men should explored, but foremost should be the concern to better serve these already dedicated users. Especially in rural areas, libraries which seem to welcome women with children do a strong business. Perhaps libraries which have not yet tapped into this important user group could look at working with social service agencies to provide facilities as well as library materials for a sort of indoor "playground/library" where children could play or read while the parents used library materials or visited. By helping these patrons fight rural isolation, the library could help its users as it helped itself.

If further studies employ the method of unobtrusive observation, it is recommended that no larger libraries than those studied here be used unless the researcher has a helper or is interested in only one area of the library. At certain times it was impossible to keep track of all the activities of all the library users.

APPENDIX A
AGE BREAKDOWN AND VISIT SCHEDULE

Users were broken down according to sex (f or m) and by the following age groups:

1	=	under 17, not accompanied by adult user
2	=	17 - 26
3-4	=	27 - 46
5-6	=	47 and over
CH	=	Children 12 and under who were accompanied by an adult user. This category was not divided by sex of user, and is not included in percent of user by sex.

Clarion

Date Time	F/1	F/2	F/3-4	F/5-6	M/1	M/2	M/3-4	M/5-6	CH
4-6-90 9:00am	7	2	4	0	4	3	5	0	0
4-23-90 2:00pm	2	3	1	2	0	1	3	1	0
4-27-90 6:50pm	3	1	2	1	0	1	1	0	3
TOTAL	12	6	7	3	4	5	9	1	3

Knox

Date Time	F/1	F/2	F/3-4	F/5-6	M/1	M/2	M/3-4	M/5-6	CH
4-6-90 11:00am	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
4-23-90 12:00	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	2
4-27-90 2:00pm	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0 0	
TOTAL	0	1	2	4	0	1	1	1	2

Rimersburg

Date Time	F/1	F/2	F/3-4	F/5-6	M/1	M/2	M/3-4	M/5-6	CH
4-6-90 1:00pm	0	2	2	0	2	0	1	1	1
4-19-90 11:00am	0	2	3	5	0	2	0	5	5
4-27-90 3:30pm	1	1	3	0	0	3	1	1	7
TOTAL	1	5	8	5	2	5	2	7	13

New Bethlehem

Date Time	F/1	F/2	F/3-4	F/5-6	M/1	M/2	M/3-4	M/5-6	CH
4-6-90 2:15pm	0	1	1	3	0	2	0	1	0
4-19-90 12:30pm	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	2	0
4-27-90 4:45pm	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	1	3	7	0	3	0	3	0

Brookville

Date Time	F/1	F/2	F/3-4	F/5-6	M/1	M/2	M/3-4	M/5-6	CH
4-6-90 3:45pm	2	0	4	1	2	0	2	2	1
4-19-90 2:00pm	2	2	2	4	2	1	1	1	0
4-27-90 12:15pm	0	0	2	7	0	0	0	2	1
TOTAL	4	2	8	12	4	1	3	5	2
GRAND TOTAL	17	15	28	31	10	15	15	17	20

Total females: 91 Total males: 57 Total children: 20

Note that "children" category is not included in the following breakdown of library users by sex.

Percent female users: 61% Percent male users: 39%

APPENDIX B

BREAKDOWN BY TIME OF VISIT

	Under 5 min.	5-10 min	10-20 min	20-30 min	30-40 min	40-50 min	Over 50 min.
F/1	0	3	11	1	0	2	1
F/2	2	2	6	2	0	1	0
F/3-4	7	3	8	2	1	2	2
F/5-6	10	10	6	1	0	1	1
M/1	3	1	4	0	0	0	0
M/2	6	2	2	0	1	0	0
M/3-4	6	2	3	1	1	0	1
M/5-6	7	4	2	0	0	3	1
CH	2	0	3	0	0	0	9
TOTAL	43	27	45	7	3	9	15

Total users in this study: 168

Users for whom visit duration times were noted: 149

The visit duration times for 19 patrons were therefore not gathered for this study.

APPENDIX C
USE GROUPINGS

By Age Group and Use Category
m = multiple use
s = single use

	F/1	F/2	F/3-4	F/5-6	M/1	M/2	M/3-4	M/5-6	CH	TOTL
Gen.	2-s	0-s	3-s	0-s	2-s	0-s	1-s	0-s	3	11-s
Brows	0-m	4-m	3-m	5-m	1-m	4-m	1-m	2-m		19-m
Ref.	0-s	0-s	0-s	1-s	0-s	1-s	1-s	0-s	0	3-s
Books.	0-m	1-m	2-m	5-m	0-m	0-m	0-m	1-m		9-m
Best	0-s	0-s	0-s	1-s	1-s	0-s	0-s	1-s	0	3-s
Sellrs	1-m	1-m	5-m	5-m	0-m	0-m	0-m	0-m		14-m
Ref ?	0-s	1-s	0-s	0-s	0-s	1-s	4-s	0-s	0	6-s
	2-m	1-m	1-m	4-m	1-m	0-m	1-m	1-m		11-m
Card	0-s	0-s	0-s	0-s	0-s	0-s	0-s	0-s	0	0-s
Cat.	0-m	1-m	1-m	0-m	0-m	1-m	1-m	0-m		4-m
Mags &	1-s	1-s	1-s	1-s	0-s	3-s	5-s	2-s	3	17-s
News	7-m	1-m	0-m	2-m	0-m	2-m	0-m	3-m		14-m
Video	0-s	0-s	1-s	0-s	0-s	1-s	0-s	0-s	0	2-s
	0-m	0-m	1-m	0-m	0-m	0-m	0-m	0-m		1-m
Ckout	0-s	1-s	2-s	5-s	0-s	2-s	0-s	1-s	0	11-s
Retrn	0-m	7-m	9-m	12-m	1-m	2-m	1-m	1-m		33-m
Copy &	0-s	0-s	0-s	1-s	0-s	0-s	2-s	4-s	0	7-s
Phone	0-m	2-m	1-m	1-m	0-m	0-m	1-m	0-m		5-m
Other	2-s	0-s	5-s	5-s	2-s	2-s	2-s	4-s	14	36-s
	11-m	2-m	1-m	2-m	4-m	0-m	0-m	0-m		19-m

Children under twelve years of age accompanied by an adult were considered to be single users only of whatever service is indicated.

Females who only used a single library service: 34
Males who only used a single library service: 42

Percentage of single-use females: 37%
Percentage of single-use males: 74%

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A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY TRUSTEES FROM NEW YORK STATE

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Introduction

I had read that library trustees are generally older than the average resident of the town they represent, are well educated, and involved in many community activities. I wanted to find out for myself, and so began some preliminary investigations.

Background Research

In 1935 a particularly important study was done by Carleton Joeckel who concluded that public library trustees were not representative of the average citizen. He found them to be typically male, over 50, well educated and often from an occupation such as law. Another candid look at trustees occurred as a result of a survey done in 1949 by Oliver Garceau. He also concluded that trustees were often elderly, limited in professional backgrounds, and essentially inactive. By inactive he refers to the unlikelihood of the trustee attending local board meetings to request additional funding. A link was deduced between an inactive library board and insufficient local funding. Also, 1949 brought another investigation, this time by Frank L. Schick, with results that were similar to Joeckels'. Schick is responsible for the piece of information that trustees generally tend to be individuals who are active in other community organizations in addition to the library.[1]

A more recent study was done in 1960 by Morton Kroll under the wing of the Pacific Northwest Library Association Library Development Project. Again, the characteristics were similar, but adding that the trustees expressed puzzlement over exactly what their duties included. Kroll discovered that a considerable amount of

time seemed to be devoted to short term matters, rather than policy making and long term planning.[2]

The American Library Trustee Association designed and mailed a survey to its members in 1961. One-third replied and their replies became the basis of conclusions. Findings supported the earlier studies with regard to personal characteristics of the average public library trustee.[3]

A bit different study of library trustees was done in 1985 by Tim Lynch. He was not concerned with personal characteristics, but rather the level of activity of library trustees. He deduced from the research that the trustees of a small library are more likely to be involved directly with the library than his counterpart at a large municipal library. This "activity" extends from actually volunteering in the library to speaking before funding organizations on behalf of the library.[4]

Lynch found that state and national memberships in trustee organizations increased as size of the library increased. Trustees consulted from the small library had participated in a grant proposal, but as library size increased few trustees had this experience. It appeared to Lynch that the larger the library the less the involvement of the trustees. The respondents were asked: what, in their eyes, was the major responsibility of a trustee? Smaller libraries tended to list fund-raising as the first concern, and the larger libraries were concerned more with policy-making.[5]

It is assumed that many other quality surveys and research projects were done, and I do not pretend to have looked at them all. Simply, in order to interject reality and a sense of history into my own research, I desired to investigate those who diligently worked before me. Comparisons are part of the human condition, and it is hoped that researchers can benefit and enlarge our base of knowledge as a result.

Methodology

A written survey was constructed during February of 1990, intending to gather information from library trustees in New York State. Included were 34 questions dealing with a variety of issues, in an attempt to collect relevant data. The hope was to learn: first, specific characteristics of the library board and those who comprise it;

second, beliefs and behaviors relative to the trustees role, and third, a list of problems facing libraries today, as the trustees see it.

It was decided to restrict the survey to trustees of New York State because of personal interest and difficulty in acquiring names and addresses. A publication does not exist which includes library trustee names due to rapid turnover, and difficulty in keeping the list current.

There are 739 public libraries in New York State. My hope was to survey 200 trustees from a sample of these libraries.

From telephone conversations with the New York State Library in Albany, I was able to obtain the sheet from the 1989 End of the Year Report that carried the names and addresses of trustees for each public library. They were most helpful and encouraging regarding my research, and commented that little research is available on trustees, especially dealing with those only in New York State. The sheets were arranged alphabetically by systems, and I was able to simply select about every fourth one to achieve my desired 200. The individual trustee was selected from the library's list by taking the first one who was not an officer. My assumption was that an officer would be more conscientious, and less representative of the group. Some libraries had as many as 12-15 trustees.

All aspects of the survey and the mailing could not have been accomplished without the patient and intelligent input from the talented folks at the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship at Clarion University, Clarion, Pennsylvania. A cover letter was prepared that stated the goal of the research, assured anonymity, and emphasized the importance of the anticipated reply. The 200 letters, plus surveys, were mailed March 15, 1990. A request was made to return the survey by March 30. Some still trickled in until April 20, and they were included in the tabulations as well. Of the 200 surveys mailed, 74 were used to form conclusions. The first response came from Long Island, and contained a certificate of death that a relative of the deceased trustee felt obliged to send. Fortunately, I am not superstitious.

The responses were divided into four groups. One group comprised the smaller libraries that served 2,500 people or less, the next category was comprised of libraries serving 25,000 or less, the next category was comprised of libraries serving more than

25,000 people, and the fourth category consisted of libraries that could not be classified by size. In most of these instances, the entire survey was filled out, except the questions on number of people served and size of budget. I assumed that the trustee was unfamiliar with these facts, but the remainder of the survey was valid and usable, and I felt should not be rejected. Another small group of respondents[4] failed to make any marks on page 3 of the survey. It appeared that the pages simply stuck together. The survey was still counted, and answers provided on the other pages were tabulated.

Results

For conclusions 23 libraries fell into the smaller category of 2,500 patrons or less, 32 were classified as medium libraries which served 25,000 or less, 11 libraries were called large because they were chartered to serve over 25,000 patrons, and the fourth ungrouped libraries consisted of 8. All categories may not equal the number returned because of answers that were sometimes incomplete or difficult to interpret. No record was kept of libraries or towns that responded except those already mentioned. Post marks were received from across the state. Many wrote lengthy notes to clarify an answer they felt might be ambiguous.

The results of the research has been divided according to the goals of the survey: composition of the board and how it works, beliefs and behaviors relative to the trustees role, and personal characteristics of the trustees.

The Board and How It Works

Examined first was the board of trustees and how it works. The research indicates that most boards meet on the average of once a month. The boards from the smaller libraries stated that they meet as frequently as 4 or 6 times per year. The rest met predominately monthly.

The term of office of the trustees varied little by size of library. The most frequently indicated length in office was five years with the smaller libraries also listing, to a lesser degree, the terms of three and four years. Not surprisingly, when asked the length of time the respondent had served as a trustee, the average answer

was five years. The second most frequently cited number was ten years, and then one year. Some respondents wrote that they had several terms in office.

The number of individuals on the board was tallied. For the small, medium, and large libraries, the average was five per board, and for the ungrouped board the average was split between five and six. A few of the boards from larger libraries had over ten trustees, and one medium-size library had 25 trustees.

Another question dealt with whether or not there was an initial orientation or training when the respondent first joined the ranks of the local board of trustees. Of the boards from smaller libraries 66 percent replied no, from the medium-sized libraries 56 percent replied no, from the larger libraries 63 percent replied yes. From the ungrouped libraries, respondents were divided 50/50 over having received initial training.

Another item asked about the availability of trustee candidates, should a vacancy develop. The choices were, many willing candidates, a select few, or difficult to find. The smaller library boards apparently have a greater difficulty finding replacements, and a greater number of trustees checked this category than the select few category. The other groupings did not indicate having difficulty finding new candidates.

When asked where the board would turn for help on issues of which it was unsure, there was a variety of answers. The majority of the replies from all groups indicated that they would contact their system library headquarters or a consultant employed there, except the ungrouped libraries where the director and other libraries were listed as choices. A significant number of replies from the larger-sized libraries indicated in second place, that they would contact the New York State Library Association, where the smaller libraries were more apt to contact the director of their own library or even the village board.

Opinions, Beliefs, and Behaviors

Of those responding, 85 percent described their level of involvement with trustee activities as active. The rest checked occasionally active, while no one checked inactive. Perhaps the inactive trustees were the 126 who did not respond to the

16

3 Federal funds

1 State funds

5 Local funds

____ Local donations

1 Consortium

The next questions are about databases. Please mark the most appropriate answer.

9. Do you provide your patrons with databases?

10 Yes

66 No

10. If not, do you have an agreement with another library to meet these needs?

25 Yes

41 No (Please skip to #17.)

11. What type of databases do you provide?

21 Online

8 CD-ROM

12. Which service(s) do you use? Please check all that apply.

10 DIALOG

____ ORBIT

1 BRS

2 H. W. Wilson

4 PAC

2 Other. Please specify. Regional Library System

1 OCLC

1 GEAC

sized libraries felt that grant writing was the responsibility of the board. Two from this group answered and wrote, don't know. A larger group, 73 percent of the trustees from the smaller libraries felt that grant writing was the responsibility of the board. Two from this group also wrote, don't know.

The next two questions explored the trustees' belief about volunteering in the library and helping the librarian with day to day operations. The only group that believed this was acceptable were the trustees from the smaller libraries where 71 percent were in agreement. This may be due again to the size of the community, and a more restrictive budget that does not allow for sufficient staff. Seventy-six percent of all the other groups of trustees did not hold this belief.

The research supported, in general, the fact that the trustee, who did not believe that a trustee should also be a volunteer in the library, answered the next question with congruency. No, they all replied they did not volunteer in the library. The trustees from the smaller libraries, who believed a trustee should help out in the day to day functions, also indicated they were volunteers. There were four trustees who did not believe they should volunteer in the library, but did so nonetheless. This could be explained in the variety of ways the question could be interpreted.

Another set of questions asked the trustees' belief about his/her involvement with public relations for the library. The responses were overwhelmingly in the affirmative. The trustees from all libraries, large and small, believed that their role should involve public relations activities. There were only three no's, one from the larger libraries and two from the medium-sized libraries. The next questions asked the respondents to check from a list public relations activities with which he/she had been involved. The most frequently checked items were open house, volunteer appreciation activities, and writing newspaper articles.

The majority of New York State trustees do not belong to professional organizations which are designed to assist trustees, but the percentages vary. Ninety percent of the trustees from the smaller libraries do not belong, 68 percent from the medium-sized libraries do not belong, 54 percent from the larger libraries do not belong, and from the ungrouped libraries 83 percent do not belong to professional

organizations. Although the percentages of noninvolvement decrease as the size of the library increases, it is still not a favorable finding. Those who did belong to a trustee organization are far more likely (3 to 1) to join the New York State Trustee Association than the National Library Trustee Association.

Asked if the trustees had a manual published by the New York State Library in Albany, all groups answered overwhelmingly yes, except the smallest libraries' representatives were only slightly over 50 percent as having ownership of a manual. No question was included as to the manual's usefulness, and this may have been an omission.

Surprisingly, 61 percent of the trustees from the smaller libraries attended conferences; whereas, the attendance by the other groups was disappointing. From the medium-sized libraries, 53 percent said they do not attend conferences designed to aid trustees, 72 percent from the largest libraries, and 66 percent from the ungrouped libraries.

Another question asked about the reading of library journals. Seventy-one percent of the trustees from the smaller libraries do not read any journals, 68 percent from the medium group do not, 54 percent from the larger group do not, and none of the respondents from the ungrouped libraries read library journals. Again, the level of noninvolvement decreases as the size of the library increases, but still it can be said that the majority of library trustees do not read professional journals. Those who did read library journals listed those they did have access to, and they are listed here in descending order of popularity: Library Journal, Booklist, and School Library Journal. Considering the fact that this was a survey for the trustees of public libraries, I found the presence of School Library Journal interesting, until I discovered further that several trustees were school librarians, and therefore, more likely to have access to journals overall, and to publications designed for school libraries in particular.

Asked what motivated the respondent to initially become a trustee, a list of replies were provided for checking. The trustees from the smaller libraries checked in descending order: I like libraries. I wanted to work for improvements in the local library, and it was their civic duty. The answers for the medium-sized library

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trustees were identical. The answers from the trustees of the largest libraries were the same, but ranked differently: first was civic duty: second, working for local improvement: and third, because they liked libraries. Response from the ungrouped libraries were different again. The first reason for becoming a trustee from this group was that they were asked by a friend: second, civic duty; and third, because they liked libraries.

The next two questions were open, so that the respondent could express themselves more freely. One question asked what in the trustees eyes were the major problems facing their library. Replies are listed in descending order of frequency by the trustees from the small libraries: funding, apathy from the community, difficulty in meeting state standards, lack of space, difficulty in keeping up with new technology, and the problem created by inactive trustees. The replies from the medium-sized libraries included: funding, lack of space, community apathy, keeping trained personnel, compliance with state standards, and planning. Replies from the largest libraries included: funding, lack of space, keeping up with new technology, staffing shortages, and community apathy. Replies from the trustees of the ungrouped libraries included: lack of space and money, salaries, new technology, collection development and maintenance. I felt most of these issues could be reduced to two concerns: money as number one, and disinterest within the community as the second.

The next open question, designed to solicit the most honest answers, asked what the respondent believed was the primary function of a library trustee. Replies from the smaller libraries in descending order of frequency included: to secure operational money, to help manage and make policies, and to assist librarians, and work toward better service. Replies from the medium-sized libraries included: to make policies and a budget, to oversee operations and do public relations, and to assist the director in providing quality service. Replies from the trustees of the larger libraries included: to establish policy and aid director, to develop a budget and oversee finance, and to learn about standards of service and study community needs. The trustees from the ungrouped libraries responded: prepare budget and oversee

operations, policy-making and budget planning, to help with decisions, and assist when needed in running the library.

Personal Characteristics

The average trustee from all libraries in the study is most likely to be female. From the smaller and the largest libraries she is generally between the ages of 61 and 70, and some years younger, between 41 and 50 if she represents the medium-sized libraries. A conclusion could not be drawn from the ungrouped libraries because of missing answers.

According to the State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, the largest age group in New York State is between the ages of 45 and 64. It appears the respondents clearly represent the majority[6].

The trustees responding seem to have lived within the community they are serving for several years before becoming a library trustee. Twenty was the average number of years.

The educational level appears to be high. The average was a graduate degree, except in the smaller libraries where a four year college degree was reported.

Occupations represented by, the trustees from the smaller libraries are professionals (medical research, teacher/professor, librarian, engineer), retired individuals, and clerical and technical staff (secretaries, computer operators). From the trustees of the medium-sized libraries: professional (teacher, photographer, writer, consultant, librarian), retired people, and sales/business occupations (real estate, salesmen). From the largest libraries the trustees represented: retired, sales/business occupations, and professional (dentist, clown/performer). Occupations represented by the trustees from the ungrouped libraries: retired, and homemaker, and sales careers all were cited with the same frequency; after these followed teacher (professional) and clerical.

The average income for the trustees from the smallest libraries was $30,000-$39,000, from the medium-sized libraries it was a tie between the $20,000-$29,000 and the over $50,000 bracket. Income levels for trustees serving the largest libraries, again was a tie between the two highest income brackets: $40,000-$49,000 and over

$50,000. The trustees of the ungrouped libraries reported incomes in the over $50,000 bracket.

Asked if the trustees were active in local politics, all groups said no (3 to 1), except for those from the largest libraries which were only slightly more active in politics than those who were not (53%).

One third of the trustees were not active in any community activities except the library. Those who were active elsewhere listed a variety of community organizations. From the smaller libraries the trustees gravitated to the local historical society, cultural organizations (architectural association, arts councils), and to service organizations (fire departments, P.T.A.). Those representing the medium-sized libraries favored both cultural organizations (DAR and philharmonics), and service organizations (American Legion, firemen's auxiliary), and cultural organizations (historical society, arts), and environmental/political action groups. Organizations favored by the trustees from the ungrouped libraries included church groups, and trade associations (Grange, business bureau).

Conclusions

A positive picture was painted of library boards in New York State as a result of the research. For those of us most interested in rural libraries, it is interesting to note the characteristics of the trustees representing the smallest libraries. Individuals needed to serve as trustees on the library boards when vacancies occur are difficult to locate. They are most likely female and 65 years of age. They typically received no orientation to the library or to the board, but they do own a manual and attend conferences. They consider the position to be very important and feel actively involved. They also volunteer in the library, have a four year college degree, and earn about $35,000 a year in a professional field. Most trustees from this group believe a major responsibility is to raise funds for the operation of the library and are active politically to bring this about. They do not seek membership in trustee organizations, but will quite often attend conferences. The major problem facing these libraries in the minds of the trustees, is lack of money. The majority are not

involved in local politics but may belong to community organizations such as the Historical Society. The average term in office is five years.

If we extend the group size from which the picture was drawn to include the trustees from the medium-sized libraries, the educational level increases, average age decreases, and attendance at conferences decreases. The average educational level then increases to a graduate degree. In 1980 only 18.7 percent of the population of New York State had a four year college degree or better.[7] Clearly, the responding trustees were better educated than the average.

The average trustee is active with library business and works to increase the funding. Most trustees from these two groups serving communities under 25,000 have even assisted in writing a grant proposal for their libraries. They also define themselves as active in public relations activities, writing newspaper articles, and helping with the library's daily functions when able. This group does not read library journals nor are they involved with state organizations for trustees.

When considering all groups, 85 percent define their involvement as active, and they certainly appear to be. It is interesting to note that there appeared no correlation between involvement in local politics and the individual's ability to influence local leaders on behalf of the library. Participation with local politics was very low (3-1 against), but ability to bring influence was high (70%).

With respect to previous studies, my findings created a new slant, perhaps representative of the changing decade. The 1935 study by Joeckel found the average trustee to be over 50 and male. Garceau found the average trustee to be elderly, limited in professional background, and inactive. Schick, in 1949, found that the typical trustee was active in community organizations. A 1961 study by ALTA again found that trustees were male and elderly. My research disputed these findings. Those responding were 61 percent female, with an average age of 50.

To a large degree findings from research done by Tim Lynch in 1985 were more similar to my own. My research confirmed that trustees are more active in the smaller libraries. They seem to be comfortable filling in for the librarian when needed, speaking at community meetings, and even working on grant proposals. This survey as well as Lynchs' asked for the respondent's opinion of the major

responsibility of trustees, and the finding were the same. Trustees representing small libraries listed fund-raising, and larger libraries cited policy-making.

Further study remains for future researchers. Areas that might need further study are how does a board release ineffective members and how likely is that to happen. It may also be worth discovering why membership in state and national associations is so low and what could be done to improve it. Inexpensive and practical avenues need to be explored to disseminate information to trustees, with the goals of shortening the perceived distance between Albany and the rural library. Trustees need effective marketing skills and public relation information to improve the image of the library, and ultimately, it is hoped increase the library's position within the community.

The pictures created by this research of the library trustees in New York State, are positive ones. It conjures up visions of dedicated and caring individuals who give volunteer time generously to their local library--much like my friend mentioned earlier. After two years, he continues to plod along, working, and making friends for the library, helping out where he can, and doing so without a full concept of what library service actually means--just a caring spirit and a strong sense of civic duty. Library trustees are nice folks!

The views of the trustees surveyed, regarding responsibilities, are consistent with those outlined in the Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State, which is published by the Division of Library Development, State Education Department in Albany.[8] As a group, they are involved, well educated, and conscientious. The behaviors acknowledged in the survey would, overall, be applauded. The majority appear to be ideal candidates.

So one has difficulty resisting the urge to wonder: why are libraries is such dire circumstances? If we can take the liberty of extrapolating from the 74 respondents, there should be an uproar from these hardworking folks whose favorite institution is so pitifully funded.

As a devotee of libraries, I have to ponder, what could be done, if anything, to help these individuals become more effective. Would a strong, vocal membership of the State Trustees Association make a difference? Would the astonishment and anger

expressed by such a body of possibly 3,500 people, over the difference in state expenditures for schools, versus the expenditure for libraries (engaged in life-long learning), be loud enough to be heard by the legislators? After all, it's only a few doors down the hall!

What would entice a trustee to join and become active in the Trustees Association? I spoke with a gentleman in Albany in charge of trustee education. He said he would need a staff of at least ten people just to be able to visit all the libraries in New York State. If that were possible, and ten positions were created, visiting is not the same as educating, coordinating, and making it physically and financially possible for these individuals to visit Albany.

This conjures up a vicious circle. There is meager financial support, which disallows the continuing education of the new and enthusiastic who may want to be a part. We must not settle for the stodgy image handed to trustees and to libraries. Librarians and trustees must work together to create a new image, to increase funding, and to advance the institutions to the level of our own efforts and talents.

Library trustees in New York State are alive and well. The certificate of death received at the beginning of this study was clearly not an omen.

NOTES

[1]Prentice, Ann E., The Public Library Trustee: Image and Performance on Funding (New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1973), p. 11.

[2]Ibid, p. 12.

[3]Ibid, p. 13.

[4]Lynch, Timothy P., "A Preliminary Survey of Library Board Trustees From Four Libraries In Pennsylvania," Rural Libraries vol. VIII, no. II (1987): 61.

[5]Ibid, p. 72.

[6]Bureau of the Census, State and Metropolitan Area Data Book (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1986), p. 508.

[7]Ibid, p. 539.

[8]Division of Library Development, Handbook For Library Trustees of New York State (Albany, New York: State Education Department, 1984), p. 6.

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TRUSTEE'S SURVEY

1. How long have you been a trustee of the library? ___ years

2. What made you originally decide to become a library trustee? Please check all that apply.

   civic duty ___ asked by a friend ___
   I like libraries ___ other (specify) ___
   I wanted to work toward the improvement of the local library ___
   other (specify) _____

3. When you first became a trustee did you receive an orientation in order to prepare for your responsibilities?

   Yes No

5. How frequently does your board regularly meet?

   __ 2 times/year __ monthly
   __ 4 times/year __ at discretion of president
   __ 6 times/year __ other

6. What is the length of term for your board members? ___ years

7. How many individuals are on your board currently? ___

8. Which is most probably when a board vacancy occurs:
   many willing candidates ___
   a select few ___
   difficult to find ___

9. What is the primary function of a library trustee as you see it?

   _____

10. If your board as a group had questions on policies or hiring practices, where would you look for help?

    _____

11. How would you describe your level of involvement with trustee matters?
    active ___
    occasionally active ___
    inactive ___

12. Do you believe one of the major duties of a board of trustees is to obtain funds for the operation of the library?
    Yes No

13. Have you been instrumental in acquiring additional funding for your library?
    Yes No

14. Have you had an opportunity to personally influence a town councilman, mayor, or school board member on the library's need for additional funds?
    Yes No

15. Did you have an active part in the approval of the library's budget?
    Yes No

16. Do you think the application for special grants is a responsibility of trustees?
    Yes No

17. Do you believe the role of a library trustee should involve some public relations activities?
    Yes No

18. Check any of the public relations activities below that you may have participated in:

    making posters ___
    designing newspaper articles ___
    volunteer appreciation activities ___
    writing a newsletter ___
    National Library Week campaigns ___
    library open house ___
    other _____

19. What do you see as the major problems facing your library today? List in order of importance.

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20. Do you believe a library trustee should also volunteer time to assist the librarian with day to day operations?
    Yes No

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21. Do you volunteer in the library?
    Yes No

22. Do you belong to any professional organizations designed to assist library trustees?

    No ___
    Yes ___ National (ALTA) ___ state (NYSTA) ___

23. Do you attend conferences for trustees when they are offered?
    Yes No

24. Do you read any library journals? Yes No

    If so, please list:

    _____
    _____
    _____

25. Do you feel the role of the library trustee is:
    irrelevant ___
    fairly important ___
    very important ___

26. About how many people is your library chartered to serve? _____

27. Approximately how much is your operating budget? _____

28. Check those which are appropriate:
    age: 20-30 ___ male ___
    31-40 ___ female ___
    41-50 ___
    51-60 ___
    61-70 ___
    71-80 ___

29. • How many years have you resided in your community? ___ years

30. Check highest level of education completed:
    high school ___
    2 yr. college ___
    4 yr. college ___
    graduate degree ___

31. My occupation is: _____

32. Check the range that best fits your income bracket:

less than $10,000	___
$10,000-$19,000	___
$20,000-$29,000	___
$30,000-$39,000	___
$40,000-$49,000	___
over $50,000	___

33. Are you, or have you been active in local politics?
Yes No

34. What civic organizations do you belong to beside the library?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME